

THE ADVENTURES OF A ROVING REPORTER

OUTSIDE INDIA

BY

KHWAJA AHMAD ABBAS

WITH A PREFACE BY

ETHEL MANNIN

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Dedicated to
K G SAIYIDAIN,
cousin, friend and *guru*,
who abetted my wander-lust
as well as my writing craze,
and must, therefore, share
the blame for this book

APOLOGY

"It has often been said that the foreign visitor to a country sees only what he goes out to see, and, though this is not always true it is fairly often true. We travel in search of corroborative detail for our prejudices. I am at least optimist enough to believe that one person in a hundred who has resided in or visited a country can talk intelligently and disinterestedly about it. He must, of course, have prejudices in its favour, because unless you have prejudices in favour of a country or a cause, you cannot see the best of it; you cannot even understand it. But he must also have a double mind which, while it is steeped in prejudice, can at the same time free itself from prejudice, in the interest of truth."

—Robert Lynd in "In Defence of Pink".

This book needs an apology

Ever since I learnt to read and write I have nursed a strong prejudice against tourists who rush through a country in a few days and then produce a pretentious volume presuming to describe, and comment upon, the land and its people, their religious beliefs, their social customs, and political problems with an overbearing air of authority. Am I rendering myself open to the same charge? I hope not.

I have no pretensions to be an authority on the Samurai spirit of Japan or on President Roosevelt's New Deal, the Trade Union tangle in France or the land problem in Hungary. Perhaps I could have written a more informative and 'authoritative' book without ever leaving my desk. "Outside India" is not a book full of political information, except what little I was able to gather on such a hurried

trip and Miss Ethel Mannin's description of it as "the Indian equivalent of John Gunther's famous book *INSIDE EUROPE*" should not be taken literally. This book does not reveal "The Truth" about anything or any person, nor is it a Tourist Guide and those looking in it for "travel information" will be disappointed. Then why, the reader may well ask, did I write this book at all? The honest answer would be that like all who have an itch, I simply had to write it. But I also believe that a roving journalist, even if he spent a few days in each country, might observe some interesting phenomena, feel the political pulse of the people, collect some useful data and, above all, form some general impressions which he might honestly record, leaving his readers to take them for what they are worth. And if, in this process, he could communicate to them some of the joy and thrill of travelling, of seeing new lands and meeting different peoples, then he might surely consider himself amply rewarded.

There are different ways of looking at the world, too.

While travelling by train in Japan I had a minor altercation with an English commercial traveller who insisted on keeping the windows closed. That was his fourth visit to the country. Yet when I asked him if the hill we saw in the distance was Fujiyama he was unable to enlighten me. However much my vision may have been limited in other ways at least I kept the windows open!

The five months I spent in "girdling the earth"—June '40 to November, 1938—were perhaps the most eventful ones during the last decade. The world map was being repeatedly altered as I travelled and, the book having been written as I went along—in trains and on steamers—, many of the observations in the earlier chapters were out-of-date by the time the concluding portion came to be written. Austria was an independent country when I applied for

my passport By the time I got the document it was a part of the Third Reich In my chapter on Hong Kong I speak of the plucky resistance of Canton, before I returned to India, it had gone up in flames I shared the happy days of the Youth Congress at Poughkeepsie with brave comrades from nationalist Spain and Czechoslovakia As I write this I know not in what concentration camps they are! However, I have not, in the light of later happenings, changed what I originally wrote, for such 'anachronisms' are but an eloquent commentary upon the unstable, harassed world I found "Outside India"

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Some of the Chapters, or parts of them, appeared as newspaper articles in *The Bombay Chronicle*, *The Hindu*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The National Herald* and *The Illustrated Weekly of India* to whose editors I am grateful for permission to reproduce them in "Outside India"

I have also to thank my cousin, K S Hasan, for suggesting the title of this book, my friends N Jog and Shakur Jafri for helping me in correcting the proofs, the men and women, too numerous to mention, all over the world who befriended a nameless wanderer and offered me a measure of goodwill and hospitality which I had no right to expect, and, finally, the personnel of the various offices of the American Express Co, Inc, without whose courteous co-operation I could not have seen so much of the world in so short a time

K. A ABBAS

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Preface

As its title suggests, **OUTSIDE INDIA**, is the Indian equivalent of John Gunther's famous book, **INSIDE EUROPE**. That is to say it is Europe from the Indian angle—which is not quite the same Europe that the European sees. Oh, for that matter, any white man in London or Ahmad Abbas, for example, was overshadowed by the acute sense of the colour-bar. I met Ahmad Abbas in London, and it was with the utmost difficulty that I convinced him that whereas his contention that scratch an English person and you find the red-white-and-blue under the skin was true of the great majority, there were nevertheless English people who did not take their ideas of India and her people from such films as **Gunga Din** and **The Four Feathers** and **Storm Over Bengal**, and who have as little use for the British Empire as the most ardent Indian Nationalist, that he was talking to one such person then, and that he would meet another in my husband, Reginald Reynolds, who carried Gandhi's message of ultimatum to the British Raj during the Civil Disobedience Campaign of 1930, and whose book, **The White Sahibs in India**, was banned for the reason that it was a fully documented indictment of British Imperialism in India. With great difficulty I persuaded him that there were others—though, I was compelled to admit, not enough of us to make an Indian feel at home in our grey capital. Indeed so oppressive was that shadow of the colour bar upon the sensibilities of Ahmad Abbas that he failed to record the sunny golden days of our so-called 'Indian summer', and in retrospect sees London through the traditional—rather

than fact—perpetual fog. It is a distorted picture of London, therefore, but nevertheless an impression that thousands of intelligent, sensitive young Indians making a brief stay there might receive, such old grey beauty as London undeniably possesses lost to them in the darkness of a shadow that does not exist for European or American visitors.

In an article in "Asia" entitled 'The Boy Goes Abroad', Abbas tells how he rose up from his home-town and accompanied by all manner of family misgivings and warnings went forth into the vast, varied and complicated world outside India. It was a journey of exploration abounding in adventures of the spirit as it could never be for any native of that world. Ahmad Abbas brought two very valuable assets to bear on that journey—his youth and his intelligence. Such defects as the book has are the defects of these qualities. If it sometimes shows signs of a too hastily formed judgment, a too superficial an impression it also for the same reason—youth and its swift response—abounds in vitality and the vivid general outline. The details may be inaccurate, or as is more often the case, lacking altogether, but the impression is there, sensitive and alive, whether it is 'democratic' England and France, or Fascist Germany and Italy, whether it is Central and Eastern Europe, or America and Upton Sinclair.

And it all makes lively, entertaining reading. It will not serve as a guide book to the world 'Outside India', but it offers an interesting itinerary and a useful 'Index' to that world. As a book of impressions-on-a-journey, of rapidly sketched pen-pictures, it seems to me both excellent and unique. There are plenty of travel notebooks by Europeans and Americans, but here is one from

a new angle—the intelligent Indian angle, with all the freshness and unspoiled candour of a mind—and vision—newly in contact with a new world . a decadent, doomed, crumbling world for the most part, civilisation rotten at the core, but with its own flashes of beauty, its own quality of strangeness

OUTSIDE INDIA should interest and entertain Indians with a dream of foreign travel, the glamour of 'far off and foreign places' and for Europeans present familiar ground in a new light, and if in some respects it disturbs their White complacency—so much the better. Not that the boy who went abroad confined himself to Europe and America, he went round the world, put a girdle round the earth, and wrote his book as he went along, new-minted from each new impression, each swift youthful reaction. The result is a travel note-book or 'diary' somewhat in the manner of Paul Morand's *Earth Girdled*, and should be of particular interest to the Indian reading public. It is to be hoped that the boy will go abroad again and stay longer, continuing his studies of the complex world outside his native India whilst his appetite for travel is still unjaded, his responsiveness undimmed.

*Owl Cottage,
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ETHEL MANNIN

BEGINNING WITH THE END

"To travel hopefully is better than to arrive and the true success is to labour"

—R. L. STEVENSON

Karachi! Once again I enter by the side door, deliberately missing the opportunity of returning to my country through the "Gateway of India"

The capital of Sind was not yet awake when the Basrah-Karachi steamer quietly slid into the harbour. Only the sun, a glowing red, glared at us from the horizon. A vague thrill of joy shot through my being. I was back in India. But mingled with it was another feeling—the feeling of regret that a rare experience was coming to an end. Do all travellers feel this way? The words of Stevenson came back to me with a new significance, "To travel hopefully is better than to arrive." So it is, indeed!

The gangway was lowered and now one felt linked again to the soil of India. The usual bustle which accompanies the docking of a steamer did not allow one to analyse one's feelings and before I knew it I was being interrogated by a plain-clothes man from the local C I D.

"Father's name?", he asked in a tone typical of the Indian police officer. And somehow that question brought a sharp reminder of the political status of my country. In England and America they don't ask you the name of your father. But in totalitarian states it is different. In Japan they want to know the name of one's mother, too,

while in Nazi Germany you must declare the race of both your parents

The interrogation proceeded. My passport was scrutinized with unusual care. I was asked what was the purpose of my trip, who financed the project, why I returned from Europe by the land route, how many days I would stop in Karachi, whether I proposed to make a speech, etc. The official enquiries were punctuated with purely personal questions. How much did the trip cost, was it cold in Europe?, when is the next war coming?, was I in Turkey when the Attaturk died? Even C I D men are human enough to take interest in these things.

It was Eid day when I landed in Karachi and the town wore a festive appearance. I had been here several years before, and what struck me now was the intense building activity manifest everywhere. Thousands of new buildings have sprung up during the last three years and hundreds may be seen on all sides in the course of construction. Unlike most Indian cities, Karachi has hardly any roots. The political and cultural centre of Sind for several centuries was Hyderabad and it is only during this century that Karachi has assumed some importance. Its population has mostly migrated from other parts. It has no history and no traditions. But Karachi is the city of the future, for the future is in the air. As the most vital air-port, junction of half a dozen most important lines, Karachi may one day challenge Bombay's position as the "Gateway of India". I was glad to make this brief stay in Karachi. It boasts of no ruins or monuments, no sentimental links with the past. It lives entirely in the present. It is big enough to have good roads and a fairly modern transport system but not too big to make one feel lost. It is perhaps one of the cleanest

cities in India and its buildings, though not distinguished by architectural grandeur, are sensibly planned on utilitarian lines. And, above all, it is all the time growing—growing steadily and perceptibly, like modern India itself!

The night was cold as the Lahore mail sped across the Sind desert and I recalled all those whom I had met during my travels who had a fixed notion that all parts of India all the year round were unbearably hot. The heat of India, exaggerated by cockneys who come direct from the fogs of London, has assumed legendary proportions in the imagination of foreigners. But California can be as hot in summer as Multan and once I almost got a sun-stroke when I indiscreetly stepped out of the air-conditioned Los-Angeles—Chicago train while it was standing on a small station in the Death Valley. And on my way to Lahore I knew that parts of India can be as cold in winter as the highlands of Switzerland or the be-fogged north coast of England.

Hindu pan! Muslim pan!" Every time the train stopped at a station the communal differences that divide our country were dinned in my ears. For some time I felt so disgusted that although I was very thirsty I would not drink either brand of water. The same night, however, I was to learn how centuries-old barriers are being broken.

It was about midnight when the train stopped at some small station. I heard someone trying the handle and, acting on a selfish impulse, I stretched myself on the whole berth and ducked my head under the blanket just as the door opened and someone entered. There was a whistle and the train started. I waited for the intruder to shake me up and demand a share of the seat which

I had usurped. Then I cautiously peeped out of the blanket and saw to my astonishment that an old man was sitting on his rolled-up bedding, evidently resigned to spend the night on that far from comfortable perch. I felt ashamed of myself and getting up invited him to come and share my seat. In a gentle voice he said, "If you are tired and want to sleep I am quite comfortable here." He said it without a touch of irony. It was genuine consideration for the comfort of a fellow-passenger. Such a thing would have been quite impossible in any of the countries I had recently visited. I had to come back to infidel India to see such an example of Christian charity.

That old man taught me many things. At six in the morning when a blue mist still clung to the sandy plain and I sat shivering, hoping to get a cup of hot tea when the train stopped at a station, he got down and had a bath at the tap on the platform. Dozens others rushed for their morning ablutions while the votaries of a hygienic civilisation still lay sleeping wrapped in their blankets. Glowing with health which he enjoyed despite his advanced years, my companion returned to the compartment clad in a fresh snow-white dhoti. From his finely chiselled features I could see that he was a Brahmin but he wore no caste marks. From his luggage he produced a circular tiffin box full of *puris*, several different kinds of vegetables and sweets. Noticing that he was preparing to have a meal I started looking out of the window to spare him the necessity of inviting me to share the food. But came the informal invitation "*Khao, Bhai—Eat, brother*." Not wishing to injure his caste susceptibilities I asked him to give me a few *puris* separately. To my surprise he would not hear of it and insisted on my sharing the food from the common plate.

"But, Panditji, do you really ", I apologetically began "You you see I am not a Brahmin I am not even a Hindu"

"That's all right", he assured me and then added, "Four years ago I would not have shared food even with a Brahmin but now it is all changed If Gandhiji can dine with Abdul Ghaffar Khan, why can't I eat with you?"

The hopeless pessimism that had been engendered by the cries of "*Hindu pani Muslim pani*" at every station now left me Who could say we were not moving fast in our country? A railway worker entered the compartment at the next station He carried with him a paper in Urdu which he proceeded to read as soon as he had settled down It was the organ of his trade union Things were moving fast, even like the train which ate up distance as it thundered across the desert, the roaring music of its wheels providing an incentive to thought and quiet reflection

Nearing my journey's end I naturally fell thinking if it was all really worth while? Had I really gained something during these five months that I had been roaming about the world? Or was the not insignificant expense a waste, a luxury that a man with my limited means should not have allowed himself?

To say that travel has broadened my outlook or given me the valuable gift of experience would be but repetition of empty platitudes I am not so vain as to think that in these five months I have acquired any appreciable knowledge of the world Indeed the more I have seen the more I have realized how little I know! Going round the world at such a speed one can get but a

very sketchy idea of people and places and, may be, I would have learnt far more about international politics if I had devoted these months to the study of books. Nor was I particularly well-equipped for this trip. I knew no language except English and could not afford to engage interpreters like English or American journalists. I was not surprised when on reading the Indian papers in Karachi I found they knew more about the events that preceded Attaturk's death than myself though I was present in Turkey during those days. At best I can claim to have had a glimpse of other lands, a nodding acquaintance with other peoples.

But even that, to my mind, has been worth while. Newspaper men, having to deal with world-shaking happenings at high pressure, are liable to develop a sense of the futility of it all. I had watched myself (as it were from outside of myself) drifting into this impersonal, cynical and cold-blooded attitude. No longer, however, will I regard the news of the bombardment of a Chinese town merely as sensational news fit for a seven-column headline. I have seen for myself the ruins in Shanghai and the plight of a million refugees and I know now what the oft-repeated item of news "Barcelona was bombed again" means in terms of human misery. When next I read that four hundred Spanish loyalists have been killed by Franco's bombs I will be inevitably reminded of the dark-haired boys and girls who had come to the Youth Congress in Poughkeepsie straight from the battle fronts of Spain. And the next war scare in Europe will not provoke a contemptuous laugh from me, for I have shared those anxious days of the Munich surrender when women cried in the streets of Paris and fear haunted the lives of Londoners.

BEGINNING WITH THE END

But, above all, if I have gained anything from this trip it is a greater love and respect for my own country. We have a tendency in India to regard ours as the most backward, hopeless country in the world. I have seen now that the problems—ignorance, poverty, disease, sectional differences—which seem the monopoly of unhappy India are present in most other countries. From a distance it is easier to admire and marvel at the amazing progress made by Japan—unless you have seen the stark poverty of a Japanese village. America may be the land of plenty and freedom but there are families starving within a stone's throw of Park Avenue and conditions bordering on serfdom prevail in the Southern states. The so-called freedom and democracy of England and France also lose their glamour when you see how, by a faked-up crisis, the ruling classes sought to make way for Fascism. The percentage of literacy apart, you will find perhaps greater intelligence in a third class compartment in India than in England or America. The questions that I was asked by fellow-passengers on the way to Lahore showed on their part amazingly wide-awake interest in foreign affairs. Indian newspapers give hundred per cent more foreign news than the best English or American papers. No, I don't think we live in such a bad old country, though I would be the last man to deny we have to change a great many things, even as people like us are working for similar changes in their respective countries. I return to India an optimist and no longer do I despair of the future of our country. In the light of our peculiar historical circumstances, indeed, I think we have done much better than many other countries.

As the train neared Lahore I had one more cause to rejoice at my return. It was evening and, as I looked

out of the window, spread out before me was the glorious panorama of sunset clouds. The colourful pageant of the hour before twilight is a daily occurrence which, while in India I hardly ever noticed. But after months of damp, foggy afternoons in Europe it was with a thrill of joy that I discovered the beauty of an Indian sunset. In that moment I seemed to have discovered all the good and beautiful things which I had not noticed before in my country. That moment was worth all the trouble and expense of five month's wanderings in alien lands.

And, so, back to the sleepy little town of Panipat, my home, where everyone knows everyone else. Much to my embarrassment they all made much of "the boy who had gone round the world" and forced me to address a meeting in my old school hall. I did not like to pose as a great adventurer but it was good to feel that my speech was one of the very few occasions during the last many years when Hindus and Muslims of the town attended a joint meeting. The speech itself was not much of a speech but rambling impressions informally related to people most of whom I knew personally. There were so many questions asked and information demanded on so many topics that after a three hours session on the first day, it was continued for quite as many hours the next evening. I did not know I could remain on my feet for six hours. Nor had I ever imagined the residents of this little town were so thirsty for information about Hitler and Mussolini, Chamberlain's foreign policy, Japanese industry and social revolution in Turkey!

And so, after a day in Delhi (where the new capital was buzzing with bureaucratic activity), and a day in Lucknow (where I saw peasants unceremoniously walk in the Assembly lobbies to hear their Ministers), here I

am back in Bombay A lot seems to have happened here in my absence There has been a strike New committees have been appointed to tackle old problems Old colleagues have left for fields fresh Dozens of "super, magnificent and best" films have run their course and new stars have been thrown on the Indian filmament Confrere Baburao Patel of "filmindia" has successfully carried on an agitation against "The Drum" The Broadcasting station has a new home and I cannot get my old flat

Back to Bombay Back to work It is good to smell printer's ink again, to be surrounded with galleys and proofs and blocks, good to hear the thunder of the press below and the sound of the bells, each with its individual tingle, is like sweet music to one's ears The wanderer is back at his desk, and glad to be so, but now and then looks up from work at—the map of the world on the wall Does it beckon again?

*Bombay,
December 1, 1938*

Book One

FAR-EASTERN JOURNEY

ALL ABOARD !

"I am of a roving disposition, but I travel not to see imposing monuments, which indeed somewhat bore me, nor beautiful scenery, of which I soon tire; I travel to see men I avoid the great"

—Somerset Maugham

And now, like the "Flash Back" trick in the movies, I go back to a day in June, 1938, when, miraculously as it were, I found myself on board S S Conte Verde, bound for Shanghai. Let my Diary tell the story

There is a colourful international drama around me as I sit down for a morning's work in the lounge of the ship ploughing her way across the Indian Ocean towards the Straits

The "cast" is cosmopolitan, there is a babel of various languages. It is a veritable League of Nations except for the fact that in that chatter-house at Geneva all the talking is done by representatives of the ruling classes while here the average man—and the average woman—dominates the scene. For a journalist, however, who does not restrict his observation only to the doings of the high and the mighty there is as much news here in this lounge as in any session of the League Assembly. If there the rulers of the world lay down the law, here you observe its reactions on their peoples

Here, for instance, in one corner is a group of German and Austrian Jews on their way to seek their fortune in the Far East. Most of them, I learn, have left their fatherland for good even at the price of losing their property. For, a Jew in Naziland may not migrate to

another country with any substantial amount of money. All his cash is automatically forfeited by the State. We have all heard about the horror of Jew-baiting under Hitler's regime but one needs see these destitute Jew families homeless, deprived of their property and forced to migrate to a totally strange land, to realise the full implications of the racial madness that has been let loose in Europe.

I was surprised to see, however, that at least socially these Jews seem to get on very well indeed with the "Aryan" Germans who are on board. There seems to be no apparent racial prejudice between them, the ties of a common language and nationality proving stronger than the race purity doctrines of their Nazi rulers. Another surprising fact is that the anti-Comintern pact between Germany, Japan and Italy notwithstanding, there is an overwhelming pro-Chinese feeling even among the Italian and German passengers. As a young German lady remarked to me yesterday, "These Japanese—they have eaten more than they can chew."

One of the reasons for this Pro-Chinese attitude of the passengers is, perhaps, the presence amongst us of about half a dozen Chinese students who are returning to their country from Germany where they had gone some years ago for studies. Although they are intensely patriotic and determined to proceed to the war front as soon as they reach Canton, all of them are a very cheerful lot and some of them are among the most popular passengers on board. They have nothing of that morbid exclusiveness of which Orientals generally and Chinese particularly are often accused by Western writers. It is a pity that none of them can talk English well because they, as well as the Indian group, have been very keen to

achieve closer familiarity In half-English and half- Pantomime I managed to inform one of them about the wave of pro-Chinese feeling in India and the proposed despatch of an Indian Ambulance Unit to China by the Congress He was delighted to hear this and, in broken but obviously sincere words, expressed his people's gratitude to India "China—India we must be friends", he passionately concluded

Among the Indians on board, there is a vast majority of Sindhi and Kathiawari merchants who are all going to Japan in connection with their business Most of them are importers of piece-goods and talking to them I had some idea of the great hold that Japan has on the Indian market I talked to them about the undesirability of allowing Japan to gain such a position of commercial dominance but they seem to be concerned only with cheapness of the Japanese goods Which, indeed, is a problem which not individual merchants but national politicians will have to solve by adopting a sound industrial and fiscal policy

Among these merchants I am glad to note a good number of young men who have travelled fairly extensively in connection with the business of their firms One of them who is hardly twenty-five and comes from Hyderabad (Sind) has been to France, Spain, Italy, China and Japan and can speak several languages fluently The rise of such an enterprising commercial community as the Sindhis is a new phenomenon in India's economic life and must be welcomed as providing a much-needed corrective to the lack of initiative and enterprise which is the characteristic of many families as well as business concerns in India

Against my expectations, I find life on board quite informal and pleasant I had been frightened by some

much-travelled friends with the prospects of being refused admission to the Dining Room if I was not "dressed for dinner" and others had cautioned me against committing any serious sartorial *faux pas*. However, here I find that unconventional attire is the vogue and keeping cool and comfortable is a good enough excuse for appearing in any dress you fancy. Flannel trousers, shorts, sandals, open collar shirts,—anything goes for men, while women are invariably found in slacks, beach pyjamas or very short shorts. No one dresses for breakfast, lunch or dinner and if one feels like coming to afternoon tea in a flowery dressing gown (as some, indeed, do) it is O K with the rest of the passengers. I speak, of course, of the Second Economic class by which I am travelling. As for the First and the Second, there is a rigid caste system enforced on the ship and we, the lower caste folk, may not enter the territory of the higher-borns. But there are actually very few passengers in the upper classes and many Second Class passengers come to our deck in the evening, as one of them told me in confidence, "to look at the girls as we have hardly any in the Second Class".

Though most of the passengers in our class are merchants or commercial travellers who have no intellectual pretensions, we are all vociferous readers. The score or two of books which constitute the Library in the lounge are much in demand. There is a huge volume of "What is Fascism And Why" prominently displayed in the shelf but it is a sad commentary on the popularity of Il Duce's philosophy that no one has so far cared to have a look at it. Talking about intellectual amenities provided on board, the cinema shows are rather insipid. We all sit on folding chairs on the darkened deck and the picture is flashed on to an under-sized improvised screen. It is

quite a novel experience to see a film on a rocking ship. If what the announcement in Italian called the "Cine-matografo" is not very bright, we are more than recompensed by the ship's orchestra which plays in our lounge from ten to eleven every morning. It is a small orchestra—three violins and a piano—but the Italian musicians play with such inspired zest that the very waves of the sea seem to beat against the ship in tune with their harmony. The piano which is a permanent fixture in the lounge is free for all to use and many a musical prodigy is seen hard at work drumming the keys and often one has to leave the lounge and go out on deck to hear the less dreary music of the sea.

Any account of the life on board this steamer will not be complete without a reference to the child. It is not a child but "the child" because it is the only child among over a hundred adults. To many of us in ordinary life, children are little more than a nuisance. But it is in a place like this that one realizes how much sunshine and pleasure they bring with them. "Our child", a little blonde German girl of about three or four, is so popular with everyone that the poor mother is often found desperately hunting for it while she is busy playing some childish game with an otherwise serious looking gentleman.

The first two days of the voyage have been enlivened by the apprehension of my cabin steward that I had jumped overboard. It happened like this. At the medical examination before embarkation the doctor discovered that I had a slight temperature. It was not surprising because I had kept awake all night talking to a friend. Anyway, I was handed over to the ship's doctor (who looked like Musso-

him but was otherwise quite a likeable gentleman) who was so scared of typhoid that he insisted that as soon as the ship started I must go straight to the ship's hospital and remain there until the doctor is satisfied that it is not a case of typhoid. Accordingly I went to the hospital straight from the deck without so much as having a peep into my own cabin. And in the hospital I remained for the next 24 hours, the doctor having meanwhile quite forgotten to inform the cabin steward that I was quarantined there. My two cabin fellows were surprised when I did not make my appearance though my luggage was there. And the cabin steward went in search of me all over the ship but could not find the truant passenger. Next day when I met him and he learnt who I was, he looked at me as if I had risen from the dead. For, he had almost decided that either I had jumped overboard or was left behind in Bombay. Here is at least an exciting prelude to a world tour.

S S "Conte Verde"

Somewhere between Bombay

and Colombo,

30th June, 1938

COLOMBO

"Pearl Of The Orient"

We touched Colombo late in the afternoon and I must confess that the first sight of the fabled "Pearl of the Orient" was rather disappointing. One had imagined Ravan's *Lanka*, with all its mythological associations, to be an enchanted land. At least I expected it to be a fair isle with a palm-fringed beach, the surf beating on the sands where once the plucky little dhows of the Arabs and later the schooners of the European merchants and colonists had found a welcome retreat from the ravages of the Indian Ocean. But we saw nothing but a bleak waterfront studded with a long line of ugly tin sheds stretching for miles. And to crown them all, as a symbol of this commercial civilisation with which Ceylon has been saddled perhaps as a legacy of Ravana, stood a huge monstrous sign "CEYLON FOR GOOD TEA". And one was instantly reminded of the European-owned tea plantations of Ceylon which are as notorious for the exploitation of labour as the tea estates of Assam. No, I am afraid Ceylon has not chosen a happy slogan to greet the passing tourist.

We were allowed only four hours "shore leave" in Colombo and so I was lucky in meeting a College friend of mine to whom I had written earlier and who had brought his car so that we could go round the city without losing much time. The main business quarters are just alongside the jetty and I found that most of the shops dealt in curios—gems and jewellery, ivory work, silver ware of exquisite workmanship, and an amazing variety of little things made of cocoanut bark and tortoise shell. Leaving this part of the city which is in no

way different to similar quarters in Bombay, Calcutta or Madras, we went in the narrower streets of the main city. This is what our foreign friends on board later described as the "colourful and noisy East", but to me it seemed depressingly like an extension of the Bhandi Bazar and Kalbadevi of Bombay and the Dariba of Delhi. Indeed, except for the language spoken which is Singhalese, Ceylon is characteristically an Indian city. I was not at all surprised to find even the inevitable Iram restaurant, but I was amused by its sign board which read "Bombay Eating House". I wish our Bombay restaurateurs were half as business-like in labelling their premises. The scheme of the city is the same as in any other colonial city. There is a clean large area with palatial buildings, fine shops, wide roads for the foreigners and a few local plutocrats, and then there is the dirty, congested, noisy "native" quarter which seems to be purposely kept in this condition in order to parade the "colourful and odorous East" to the foreign tourist and to prove the incompetence of the eastern people to rule themselves.

While a great part of the population of Ceylon is Singhalese I found the business mostly in the hands of the foreigners. Europeans own the biggest plantations and ware-houses while shops are mostly owned by merchants from southern and western India. The indigenous population seems to be condemned to work on plantations though a small educated minority among the Singhalese have succeeded in monopolising Government services. There are evidently many cottage industries—otherwise how can the foreign tourist be provided with curios?—but no effort seems to have been made to start large scale factories. The island, rich in rubber, has great potentialities in this direction and even though coal is lacking, the many large

waterfalls can be harnessed to yield hydro-electricity. But the opening of factories would create an industrial proletariat, a young Ceylonese told me, and make it difficult for the European tea planters to find cheap labour. And so Ceylon remains the producer of raw materials and manufacturer of dainty little nicknacks for the foreign tourist.

Even a casual tour of Colombo reveals the diverse nature of the population. Besides the Singhalese who are mostly Buddhists, there is a fairly important minority of Muslims who claim descent from the early Arab sailors who traded with Ceylon in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and settled there in large numbers. An equally important minority is that of the Christians and then there are Tamil-speaking Indians, mostly concentrated in Jaffna. Parties are largely formed on denominational or rather racial basis even though some of them use national or cosmopolitan nomenclature. Thus the "Ceylon National Congress", a body of moderates and constitutionalists, is predominantly Singhalese in outlook. There is, I learnt, a Muslim League, too, claiming to defend the interests of the Muslims while the Christians and the Tamils have parties of their own—often each group having a number of mutually conflicting parties. None of them, it would appear, has any clear cut political or economic programme. But recently the Lanka Sama Samaj, a party of young Socialist and radical intellectuals working up a mass basis, is coming up. At the last elections to the State Council it could not gain many seats for, in spite of adult franchise, money-bags still determine the elections in Ceylon. But since then they have had time to organise themselves and hope to fare better at the next elections. My friend, who is a Muslim but who is

working for a united front of the radicals of all communities on the Lanka Sama Samaj platform, is likely to be a candidate for the Council at the next elections at which, he hopes, the progressive element is likely to gain a substantial legislative strength. I was not surprised to hear from him that in Ceylon, too, the reactionaries had been raising the bogey of "Religion in danger" against the progressive element. But the youth of Ceylon, I learnt, are beginning to assert themselves in the politics of their island and as I write these lines I have before me a copy of "Young Ceylon", a particularly vigorous and outspoken journal conducted by a band of Ceylonese youth of all communities, committed to a progressive social, political and economic programme. The future of Ceylon is undoubtedly with them.

As our ship sailed away at night and the "Ceylon for Good Tea" sign, now electrically lit, blinked at us in silent salute, I hoped next time I visit the island they would have put up something more artistic and better expressive of the new spirit in the isle of happiness and prosperity that Ceylon can yet be.

S S, "Conte Verde"
Somewhere between
Colombo and Singapore,
1st July, 1938

SINGAPORE

"Singapore is not the most beautiful city in the Tropics But is there a tighter knot that joins the continents, the oceans and the colonies, a more inevitable cross-roads, a public square more crowded with races and coloured by nature?"

—Paul Morand in
"Nothing But The Earth".

"It gives us the command of China and Japan, with Siam and Combodia, to say nothing of the islands themselves" That is what Sir Stamford Raffles said in 1819 when he annexed Singapore for Great Britain and it clearly sets down the strategical importance of this port for the Empire That is, indeed, why even when she has to foot a heavy bill of armament at home, Britain has invested no less than ten million pounds in a naval base at Singapore No one is allowed to visit the naval base or to go anywhere within sight of it but even before we entered the harbour of Singapore we could see a huge oil depot established on a separate island with half a dozen oil tankers standing by Those who know what a great part oil plays in modern warfare and how it has recently come to be the most precious and coveted liquid in the world cannot but note the significance of this oil depot We could also see in the distance several British men-of-war while, undoubtedly, there must be many more round the bend in the docks of the naval base itself Nor is Singapore only the strongest naval base in the East It also possesses the world's second largest airport, equipped with the latest anti-aircraft devices With bellicose Japan in the offing old Britannia is taking no chances

To me, however, Singapore had more than merely strategic significance. I shall remember it as the town which provided me with my first glimpse of China. No, I am not forgetting my geography. Indeed, I have an atlas by my side which definitely shows that Singapore is very far from the Chinese soil. But the population of the port is predominantly Chinese and as you walk along its crowded bazaars or even drive out to its suburbs you find yourself in an unmistakably Chinese atmosphere.

Only an hour before we touched Singapore I had finished reading Pearl S. Buck's novel of contemporary Chinese life, "Sons", and I cannot recommend a better guide to China than this or any other novel by this author. Far more important than consulting a list of hotels or a road map of a country—and what else can you find in guide books?—is to get acquainted with the mind and soul of a country and its people. This I gained from Mrs. Buck's novels in which she shows the transition of China from a conservative, feudal country through a phase of brigands and warlords to the present awakening and speedy modernization, the birth of a new era. In Singapore I saw the new Chinese youth—bold, assertive, free from the superstitions of the past and looking to education and science for the regeneration of their country. I saw Chinese girls (I had never imagined they would be so elegant) who were until a decade ago condemned to limp with tiny, twisted feet now going about their daily business with a self-confidence and easy grace which our modern Indian woman has yet to acquire. And I found them intensely patriotic, trying in whatever way they could to help their country in its hour of trial. There are a score or so of Indian merchants with big piece-goods stores in Singapore and the manager of one of them told me that he could not sell even a yard

of Japanese cloth to the Chinese who were the majority of his customers. There is a spontaneous and complete boycott of Japanese goods by the Chinese population. Even while I was in this shop I saw an evidence of this boycott. A middle class Chinese girl came in to buy some cloth for a gown. The salesman showed her some stuff which happened to be Japanese. She threw it away in disgust. And when he told her that he had only Japanese cloth within the low price she had specified, she walked out saying, "Then I must go without a new gown this year."

While the population of Singapore is predominantly Chinese with a substantial proportion of Malays, a good deal of business is in the hands of the Indian merchants, mostly from Sindh. I noted down the names of the sign boards of three consecutive shops: Kishanchand—Nassim Salch—Lee Woo and Co. An Indian, a Malay Muslim and a Chinese! Some Chinese merchants have achieved conspicuous success in business and one or two can be counted among millionaires. We saw the house of one such Chinese plutocrat—Haw Par Villa—which is the property of the manufacturer of a well-known brand of patent medicines. This house which is kept open for visitors—possibly as an advertisement stunt!—is built on a small hill of its own and is an amusing example of the infantile imagination of a plutocrat producing an architectural nightmare. The main residential building is not very large though all the rooms are full of Chinese "Art Ware" and modern European furniture, a curious medley reminiscent of the Museum-like appearance of the palaces of some of our Indian princes. It is in the grounds and the garden that the designer's imagination has run riot. There are artificial hills, artificial trees, effigies of animals, little pagodas with tiny bridges, miniature towns and

villages populated by dolls I was told it cost almost a million pounds to build that house And I wished I could meet Mr Haw Par to tell him what an utter and criminal waste of money it was But luckily for him he was not at home!

And as for contrast I later visited the slumland of Singapore where thousands of poor Chinese live in what are known as "cubicle dwellings" In that very day's local papers I had read the report of Doctor P S Hunter, the Municipal Health Officer, who described the living conditions in this area as "almost inhuman" and called for "drastic, very drastic measures to deal with the problem" A cubicle in Singapore, I must explain, means a room about 10 feet by 10 feet which is the home of an entire family In the words of Doctor Hunter himself

"It is all that a man, his wife and his family occupy for all the ordinary purposes and activities of domestic life It houses all their belongings including their food Children are born in them and spend the first year of their lives in them People die in them while the ordinary activities of the family go on around them"

This is a sordid enough picture and all honour to the Health Officer for exposing these conditions But what I saw with my own eyes is something even more horrible than these words can convey Miles and miles of dark, crooked alleys in Singapore's Chinatown are crowded with these tenement houses each with hundreds of cubicles and each cubicle, inaccessible to air or light, tenanted by a whole working class family And there I saw these patient humble people living their wretched life, housewives (who reminded me of the heroine of "Good Earth") cooking food at smoky stoves and children playing nearby in dirt and squalor and darkness

Most of these workers, brought from China when the British discovered rich tin deposits in the Malay Peninsula some sixty years ago, are now employed in tin, rubber and pine-apple factories. Many more of them are found in the hinterland working on rubber plantations and the European-owned tin mines. Lately the workers in these tin mines have become restive and there have been many strikes. Even on the day that we were in Singapore, I found the town walls full of newspaper posters screaming "LATEST ABOUT HONG FATT" Hong Fatt, I discovered, is the largest tin mine in the Straits Settlement at Sungai Besi, Selangor, near Kuala Lumpur. The workers struck work as a protest against low wages and bad treatment by the contractors. There was a sensation in the entire colony and even British-owned newspapers like the "Straits Times" advocated the setting up of an arbitration machinery and, at least partly, conceding the demands of the workers. Indeed the Government has already been forced by earlier strikes to draw up a Wage Dispute Bill which will be shortly introduced in the Federal Council. It is good to see how by collective action even the poor little Chinese worker can upset the mighty British capitalists, for I saw in the same Singapore papers that the tin shares are on the decline since the declaration of this strike and the London Stock Exchange is all a flutter!

Before returning to our boat we also went to see the Air Port which is the second largest in the world, the largest being La Bourget, Paris. It was after sunset when we reached there though from its terrace we could still see a red streak of cloud in the west. It is, indeed, a magnificent Air Port, the landing field being monsoon-proof as it is tiled with slabs of cement concrete. The

mam building, the several hangars, the nearby Flying Boat station in the sea—everything is on a large scale, much larger, in fact, than the requirements of the passenger services that operate through Singapore. But the Air Port is another mighty link in the defences of the Empire. While we were having some cold drinks on the terrace we witnessed some searchlight manoeuvres which were being carried on by the Air Port staff. An aeroplane was wheeled out of the hangar and soon it was in the air, its red light glowing in the surrounding darkness. Then it soared high and the tail light was switched off. It was lost—but not for long. Three fingers of powerful searchlights flashed from different positions and soon they had picked out the aeroplane, like a little moth caught in the light.

Even when we reached the boat we could see from the deck the same game of hide-and-seek being played. The searchlights still scoured the skies and caught between them the 'plane hung there like an evil star over Singapore.

*S S "Conte Verde,"
Somewhere between
Singapore and Hongkong,
5th October, 1938*

GATEWAY OF SOUTH CHINA

"Hong Kong is another of those keys to the world that hang from the key-ring which should replace the trident as England's emblem."

—Paul Morand in

"Nothing But The Earth".

It was a beautiful starry night with a bright half moon when I went to sleep in my cabin. Awakened by the slowing down of the ship at about 3 o'clock in the morning I looked out of the port-hole and in that half-awakened state had reason to wonder if the starry sky of the previous night had come down to earth. The lights of Hong Kong are truly a magnificent sight. To imagine them you have to bring all the hill stations of India—Simla, Mussoorie, Nainital, Ootacamund and Shillong—, place them side by side on the Bombay shore alongside Malabar hill and then turn on the lights. Like Rome of old, Hong Kong is situated on seven—or, perhaps, even more—hills, on both sides of a fine bay.

Quite a crowd collected on the deck even at that early hour, excited to have the first glimpse of China. By the time the ship was berthed at the quay, the lights of Hong Kong went out one by one and the pale light of the rising sun slowly crept up from behind the dark green hills. That was beautiful, indeed, but actually the first glimpse I had of life in Hong Kong was a heavy boat crawling alongside the ship, rowed by two thin Chinese girls who were evidently finding the strain of it too much for their emaciated bodies. There were many such boats about and later on I was told these were the water-dwellers of Hong Kong, many of whom are born and die on these very boats.

without ever having slept a night on land. They lead a precarious life, the men now and then getting work as coolies or hiring their boats for transport, while the women catch fish and children dive for pennies thrown in the water by people on the ships. A pathetic picture when one realizes that there are thousands of such families.

The next thing I saw was a number of Chinese coolies unloading heavy packages of the ship's cargo—the invariable version of the White Man's Burden that you see at every Eastern port from Bombay to Shanghai. These Chinese coolies are among the poorest paid labourers in the world though even among them signs of revolt against exploitation are becoming manifest.

As in Singapore, so in Hong Kong, I marvelled at the thorough-going way the British have cornered every important spot in the world, particularly in the East, for their Empire. They have Ceylon to protect the eastern route to India, as they have Gibraltar on the western route. They have Singapore to protect their mining interests in the Straits and then they have Hong Kong to ensure their position in the Far East. Hong Kong, thus, is quite a typical colonial town with its British garrison and Indian Sikh and Gurkha soldiers to maintain "law and order." The big British commercial firms with palatial premises in the busy area along the waterfront thrive, holding as they do, key positions in the trade of the Far East. Along with them, as a sort of commercial second fiddles, are also thriving quite a number of Indian merchants, mostly from Sindh, who do extensive trade in silk and piece goods, not only in Hong Kong but also in the interior of China.

But, keeping aside the foreign quarter, Hong Kong is definitely a Chinese city and the vast majority of the

population is Chinese, living under the rule of the Union Jack, but culturally as well as patriotically maintaining their Chinese character. Indeed, even if they pay taxes to the British their allegiance is to the Chinese Republic. A striking demonstration of this was given on a day previous to the one we arrived in Hong Kong, July 7, when the first anniversary of the Lukouchiao incident which started the present Sino-Japanese hostilities, was observed everywhere in China and even by Chinese abroad, as the "Anti-Aggression and National Reconstruction Day." An Indian friend in Hong Kong gave a graphic description of the Day when at noontime a three minutes silence was observed in honour of the War Dead and every Chinese citizen stood at attention wherever he was at that moment, in street, shop or home. White roses and paper national flags were sold to raise funds for the national war chest and, as in other Chinese towns like Canton and Hankow, the Chinese in Hong Kong vied with each other to contribute to the national cause. The day I was in the city, there was still great excitement and Chinese papers were full of reports of the observance of the anniversary all over the country. Some even brought out special editions to review the course of the war and the present situation. The same day they had published news of the Indian Ambulance unit which is being sent to China, which was enthusiastically commented upon in the press and the public as an expression of India's solidarity with China in the hour of her trial.

One of the reasons for the importance of Hong Kong is its nearness to Canton, for long recognised as the political, cultural and commercial centre not only of South China but of the whole country. Now that the Japanese are concentrating their attack on Canton which has been

repeatedly bombed in the last few weeks, Hong Kong assumes greater importance. The people resident here are almost all Cantonese, in many cases with commercial and family contacts with Canton which is only as far from Hong Kong as Poona is from Bombay. In spite of repeated efforts of the Japanese bombers, the railway line between Canton and Kowloon (Hong Kong) is still intact and thus every time there is a bombardment in Canton, there is an influx of refugees into Hong Kong. I met several people who had been in Canton during an air-raid and they told terrible stories of how death and destruction was caused by Japanese bombers. Though the city is so large that only a small portion of it has been hitherto affected by air-raids there have been many casualties in Canton, the victims in many cases being women and children. I met a Chinese photographer who had returned only a few days ago from Canton with a batch of pictures which are gruesome reminders of the horrible effects of air bombing on a civilian population. I believed him when he said that as a professional press photographer he had "covered" many similar outrages, but some of the scenes he saw in Canton after a recent air raid were so gruesome that he could not bear to look at them, much less photograph them.

It is amazing, however, that in spite of so much suffering the morale of the Chinese people remains unbroken. Of course when thousands are rendered homeless they have to find refuge in some safe place. Singapore has had to bar admission to the refugees in spite of protests by the Chinese citizens and Hong Kong is naturally full of them, many people blinded or maimed in an air-raid on Canton being reduced to begging in the streets. But an Indian merchant who is travelling with us from

Hong Kong and who was recently in Canton bears witness to the people's remarkable powers of endurance and discipline. Unless you go to the area immediately affected, he said, you may well wonder whether Canton has been really subjected to such severe bombing. Business goes on as usual and the people show no signs of alarm or panic. A correspondent, wiring the details of the war anniversary celebrations remarked that in spite of several air-raid alarms people were not panicky in the least and went about collecting money for the War Fund and demonstrating in the streets.

I myself find evidence of this unbroken morale here on board the ship which is crowded with Chinese going from Hong Kong to Shanghai. Many of them fled at the time of the evacuation of Shanghai, leaving their homes to be burnt and razed to the ground by the Japanese invaders. Now they are returning to the International Settlement or the French Concession in the hope of finding some business to do. Most of them belong to the middle class families who have been the great sufferers in this war. Many have lost near relations who were in the army. And yet living amidst them you would hardly guess they were a war-weary people. From the ancient fatalism of the Chinese a new spirit of cheerful sacrifice has been born. One of my cabin-fellows replied when I asked him what business he was doing, "Oh, I had a factory for making cigarettes in Shanghai. The Japanese, they drop one bomb—all smoke at same time." It may be bad English but it is a remarkable sense of humour that could be retained despite great personal loss.

It has been a veritable invasion of the ship by the Chinese. Before their overwhelming numbers the European passengers have been literally put into a corner. And

these Chinese, they do enjoy life even if a war has to be fought Unlike Indians, who seldom get rid of their innate shyness while on board and are conspicuous by their absence from the social activities, the Chinese passengers are to be found everywhere—on the deck playing games, in the swimming pool, in the smoking room, at the common piano They have captured all the deck chairs and thus forced the White passengers to keep to their cabins. It is a most significant example of the coloured "worm" turning

S S "Conte Verde,"
Somewhere between
Hong Kong and Shanghai,
7th July 1938

INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT

"The Chinese are a gay, undisciplined, merry, happy-go-lucky people. Even the poor people are merry, and make the best of what they have. Only in famine are they downcast, and even then a chance bowl of rice, an unexpected penny, will make them gay. They can endure suffering beyond anything I have ever seen elsewhere."

—Pearl S. Buck.

It is the morning of Sunday the 10th. Our ship is puffing its way up the delta of the Yangtze and the Whangpoo rivers and as the stream is pretty fast we can only move at a snail's speed. All the Chinese passengers, most of whom belong to Shanghai and are returning after months of homelessness in Canton and Hong Kong, have been up from an early hour. Today they are unusually quiet as they look out in the direction of Shanghai.

The sky is overcast with dirty, earth-coloured clouds and the water, too, is a depressing blackish yellow. Now and then there is a drizzle. The air is still and even the smoke from the ship's funnel goes straight into the sky. It is a perfect setting for the tragic sight we are to see. We go along a bend in the river and, then, the doomed city of Woosung bursts upon our view. It was a flourishing suburb of Shanghai—once. Now it is all in ruins, victim of Japanese bombs and shells. Our Chinese friends look on with moist eyes though they would not give expression to their feelings. Many of them had their homes here. They will, like a million more like them, take refuge in the International Settlement.

We have left the joint delta of the two rivers behind and are on the Whangpoo. Now we can see the whole city stretched for miles along the banks of the river. At last we arrive at the Hongkew wharfs and the ship is berthed. But our destination, the International Settlement, is yet some distance away. We are all herded in a launch and taken to the Custom House jetty where there is such a rush and confusion of luggage that I prefer to leave my cases behind with the obliging American Express representative and fight my way out through the surging mass of passengers and their friends and relatives who have come to receive them. I am greeted with a smile by a young Chinese girl who hands me a flower and says some charming things to me—only I cannot understand them for she speaks Chinese. Then I am embarrassed to find her pinning a bouquet to the lapel of my coat and I have to put over an improvised pantomime show to ask her what it is all about. A student with a bundle of English books under his arm comes to my rescue and explains that she is collecting funds for the refugees camp and, of course, I am glad to contribute my mite.

Then I look for a taxi to go to the Foreign Y M C A where I propose to stay but I am terrified to find that the only conveyance I can get is a rickshaw. And I hate riding in this vehicle which is a survival from the days when slaves carried rich men in Sedan chairs and pulled their carriages like horses. But I have no alternative as I do not know the way and it has started to rain. And the people on the Nanking Road which leads to our destination enjoy the amusing spectacle of a most self-conscious young Indian riding in a rickshaw, and simultaneously trying to keep his balance on the unsteady perch and hide his embarrassed countenance under the brim of his

hat The rickshaw man pulls it so fast in the midst of an alarming medley of trams and buses and rickshaws and men and bicycles that my social conscience is overpowered by the primary instinct of self-preservation and I fear for my very life. Never again did I allow myself to suffer another rickshaw ride. But I made enquiries about the men who earn their living by pulling these vehicles and I am appalled at the low wages they get and the early age at which they invariably die of consumption. For ten cents (roughly one anna) you can get them to pull a bloated plutocrat for a mile! Perhaps only the peasant in some parts of India can equal this record of sweated labour!

But Shanghai is full of far more exciting and pleasanter things than starving rickshaw coolies. The fast tempo of this, the world's most amazing city, its reckless pursuit of pleasure and the sense of insecurity and uncertainty about future which is in the air as a consequence of the recent troubles and which further sharpens the edge of desire for momentary enjoyment and escape from reality—these are guaranteed to set right the most uneasy social conscience.

It is necessary, however, first to know what exactly Shanghai is or, rather, was. Its peculiar life is directly traceable to the unique political position that it has "suffered." Yes, even the large number of night clubs in the city may be the result of imperialist politics and international finance.

We are forced to speak in the past tense. Shanghai was not one but several cities. First, there was the old Chinese city (it is all in ruins now) which was a part of the territory of the Republican Government. It had

a population of about a million with many factories, business houses and crowded bazars. It was the terminus of the Shanghai-Nanking Railway, perhaps the most important railway station in the Far East. There is a Japanese flag flying now on the ruins of the station building. It was one of the first targets of the Japanese bombers. Adjacent to this city, divided by a fencing which has now been reinforced by barbed wire, is the International Settlement which is perhaps the strangest city in the whole world. It is jointly controlled by the British, American, Chinese and Japanese with representatives of all these various elements on the Shanghai Municipal Council. Across the road from this Settlement is the French Concession controlled by France alone. The defence of the International Settlement is mainly entrusted to British soldiers and a detachment or two of the United States marines. The police are either Chinese or Sikh. The senior partner in this strange firm is, of course, Britain, next comes the United States, the Chinese were given some representation on the governing body because they constituted the largest part of the population while the Japanese were given a share to keep them quiet. How this came about is a long story—as long as the history of Western imperialism in the Far East.

The important point to note is that this city thus acquired a peculiar cosmopolitan character. Besides the four nationalities mentioned above, there are nationals of almost every country in the world resident here—for, China has been for long the happy hunting ground of European capitalists. There are a large number of Germans, Portuguese, Russians, (mostly refugees who found their country too hot after the revolution) and even some

Indians As invariably happens in all cities with such a mixed population,—mostly composed of fortune-seekers, adventurers and profiteers—the city acquired the vices and doubtful virtues of all, while maintaining the cultural and moral values of none. People who got rich quick (by selling arms to bandits, teaching Chinese to smoke opium, and by other more or less dubious methods) wanted to spend it quick, too. And thus Shanghai came to be classed amongst the world's leading "Cities of Sin." I doubt, however, whether it deserves such eminence. The conception of what is "Sin" has itself changed, and now we seek reasons for moral degeneration in political and economic phenomena. Moreover, what claims Shanghai had for this title are now, in lesser or greater degree, shared by all big cities governed by the profit motive.

It is true, however, that Shanghai is a particularly gay city. The people here, including the majority of the Chinese, indulge the pursuit of pleasure with almost philosophic earnestness. Not only for the rich but for the middle classes there are innumerable places of entertainment where, it must be conceded, escape from reality is offered at moderate rates, in clean surroundings and without any hypocritical pretensions. There are cafes, dance halls, skating rinks, swimming pools, cinema houses, theatres, cabarets, night clubs, just plain bars and wine shops, a few opium dens and, of course, the brothels.

The latest craze is greyhound racing. I have no first hand experience of most of these places but I did look into some of the dance halls and did not find them such evil places as I had imagined. Nor are the "taxi-dancers" of Shanghai such dangerous or undesirable creatures as many believe them to be. Most of them, very charming and chic, come from

quite respectable but poor middle class families, and are forced to take up this profession by economic necessity. Some of them are educated, too, and one who spoke perfect English said to me, with a shrug of her pretty shoulders, "Well, I have a mother and two young sisters. My father died ten years ago, brother was killed in the war. It was either taxi-dancing or "the other thing" for me. I don't mind dancing." Personally I have never seen any sense in the rather funny movements which are called ball-room dancing. To those who said it was good exercise I have always retorted that I would prefer to have a run in the country. But evidently there are many who enjoy it and so long as there are such lonely men with long boring evenings on their hands, the trade of the taxi-dancer would flourish. And in the present economic order the argument of the girl I have mentioned above is unanswerable. Without presuming to write a "Guide for Philanderers" I may add that a taxi-dancer may be hired for 50 cents per dance which, at the present rate of exchange, works out to about five annas. Of course she gets only fifty per cent of it. The rest goes to the owner of the establishment. The old, old story of capital and labour!

I went to see a popular Chinese theatre but it reminded me so much of the crudest Indian theatrical company that I walked out only after a few minutes. The play was a cheap farce, the traditional story of a woman with many lovers, and the acting was indifferent. Later I learnt that there are better theatres also which are patronised by the educated classes and where modern plays are staged. Evidently I had strayed into the worst possible place, only frequented by the illiterate folk. But the informal atmosphere of the place considerably amused

me In front of every seat there is a place for keeping food and everyone seemed to be drinking tea or eating something At the back of the hall some space had been cleared for an improvised restaurant and people who felt more hungry went over there and had a regular meal while still watching the show As the hall filled up, some of the spectators even walked up the stage and nonchalantly took their seats in the wings Often the actors would exchange some pleasantries with members of the audience, all enjoying a hearty laugh Besides this hall which was on the tenth floor of a building there were about half a dozen more, all built round a roof garden which is, indeed, a happy idea In each of these halls some show or other was going on, the varied fare ranging from magical tricks to old style Chinese dancing What amazed me was that one could walk into any of these halls, have a look at the show and he was expected to buy a ticket only if he liked it and wanted to sit through the whole programme

This theatre gave me a glimpse into the life of the city-bred Chinese who, a well-informed Chinese friend told me, have a weakness for shows of all sorts and believe in enjoying life even if a war is going on in the neighbourhood It is not that they are not patriotic I have talked either directly or through interpreters with almost all classes of Chinese citizen of Shanghai—University professors, journalists, students, business men, shop girls, rickshaw coolies and shoe-shine boys—and I found them invariably enthusiastic about the national cause But the Shanghai-bred Chinese has developed a taste for entertainment which persists even in moments of national crisis Of course, this is peculiar to Shanghai and is very far from being true of the whole of the country

Some Chinese friends, on learning that I ate neither pork nor frogs, took me to a Muslim restaurant where I struggled with a dish of chicken and a pair of chop sticks. Though the Muslims in China do not eat any prohibited meat, they take indigenous wine regularly after meals and my friends were surprised when I declined the liquor when it was brought. On enquiry I found that in dress, social customs and apparently even in names the Chinese Muslims did not differ in any way from other communities. Their women do not observe purdah. I further learnt that there has never been communal friction in China and I wished I could tell them the same about India. My Chinese friend suggested that his countrymen were essentially irreligious and though most of them profess the Buddhist faith, they would readily worship any god who came their way. He maintains that they have never taken religion very seriously though they have passed through centuries of superstition, during which they have willingly added whatever deity was offered them to their pantheon, not caring to investigate their rival claims and afraid to displease any of them. In fact almost all the Chinese people with whom I discussed this topic seemed to attach no importance to denominational labels at all. Later on I was told that actually it is bad form in Chinese society to be curious about other people's religious beliefs.

In their daily life I don't suppose the Chinese observe any religious ritual. But if there is something which approximates to a ritual it is the holy duty of imbibing tea as many times as possible during the day. Before starting work they must have a cup, while working they must have frequent helpings and after the day's work is done then, of course, they must refresh them-

selves with "the cup that cheers" With meals, tea is the only liquid served and often I have embarrassed my hosts by asking for water, for no cold drinking water was available in the house Even a confirmed tea-addict like me had to acknowledge defeat in Shanghai There is a limit to the number of cups you can consume of Chinese tea which is slightly bitter, and they are surprised if you ask for sugar!

Foreign Y.M.C.A.,

Shanghai

12th July 1935

SHANGHAI POST-SCRIPT

"It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the world may yet be saved by the East. But this will be possible only on conditions. One condition is that China should survive as an independent nation capable of self-development."

J. M. D. PRINGLE in "China Struggles For Unity"

I hope I am not giving away a trade secret when I say that the only way of gathering information on such a hurricane world tour as mine is to get into touch with local journalists wherever one goes. Once you establish your professional *bona fides* even the most hard-boiled war correspondent will be only too glad to deluge you with all the information you need. There is a tendency to regard newspaper men as soulless cynics but one has only to know them to find how many of them are hearty, kind individuals, often terribly over-worked and proverbially impecunious. In Shanghai I received the utmost help from the journalists I met and it would be ingratitude not to acknowledge how much I am indebted to them for an understanding of the situation in China.

The Fabian Chows, a couple of rare talent and charm, are more than mere journalists. The husband, a young man of about twenty-five, is on the editorial staff of the "North China Daily News", a British-owned but moderately pro-Chinese newspaper. Fabian Chow, being perhaps the only Chinese among the important members of the staff, has been entrusted with the task of reviewing the war situation from day to day and his articles are read with particular interest by the lay readers as well as rival newspapermen and foreign correspondents, for



SINGAPORE
Half-started peddler



HONGKONG
Refugees from Canton



SHANGHAI
After an Air Raid



KOBE
After the Deluge

they reveal a wonderful grasp of the strategical, as well as the wider political, implications of the war developments. He had recently been to Canton and turned out some brilliantly-written and vividly descriptive articles about the city which has been, repeatedly, the target of Japanese bombers. An ardent nationalist, passionately devoted to the cause of his country, he yet maintains a balance of mind and accurate judgment when writing for his paper. I discussed with him the future possibilities of the situation in China and he gave his opinion, not as a patriot desiring the glory of his motherland but as a trained journalist who has learnt to evaluate things dispassionately and to analyse political developments without prejudice.

I asked him what he thought of China's chances of resisting Japanese aggression and he said that they were brightening up unmistakably. That they had been able to hold out for over a year was in itself no mean achievement and, meanwhile, they had been achieving unprecedented national unity and also marshalling their defence forces. Moreover, he argued, the very size of the country was against Japan's chances of conquest. They may bombard a few big towns and capture a few hundred miles of territory along the railway line but they could not so easily subjugate a nation that had now been awakened and would fight to the last for her freedom. And even as he said that, there was such a fire and determination in his eyes that to me they seemed to symbolise the new spirit of China—defiant and challenging.

Mrs Fabian Chow, also a journalist like her husband, is representative of the new womanhood of China. Well-educated, sociable and elegantly dressed, she has none of the timidity and reserve which is traditionally associated

with the Chinese woman. She is politically conscious and an active social reformer, member of many societies and a friend and co-worker of Madame Chiang Kai Shek. Recently she has returned from a lecture tour of Australia where she represented her country at the International Women's Conference and later travelled throughout the country, as an unofficial ambassadoress, addressing meetings and acquainting the people in that country with the present situation in China. Speaking perfect English, she told me what colossal ignorance about her country she encountered in Australia. "They could hardly believe that a Chinese woman could travel alone and address meetings in English." I remarked that Indian women who have gone abroad have had similar experiences as the average westerner is deliberately brought up in the belief that the Oriental people are all barbarians. This brought us to the similarity of conditions in India and China. She wanted to know about Indian women, how far they had achieved social emancipation. We found that both in China and in India it was through active participation in the nationalist movements that the women have achieved a large measure of emancipation. She was thrilled and overjoyed to hear the role Indian women have played in the various civil disobedience movements and how by working for the freedom of their country they had achieved the recognition of their equal status.

But I wanted to know more about the Chinese women, particularly their legal status since the advent of the Republic. Though I knew that under the Republic they enjoyed far more privileges than they did in the days of the decadent monarchy when their position was little better than that of serfs, I was pleasantly surprised when

Mrs Chow told me that the Republic made no discrimination whatsoever between men and women. Thus women were eligible to receive all educational facilities with the men; they could hold any Government post and they had the right to vote. What is more, they had the same rights of inheritance as men, and a wife had a separate legal identity and could control her property without any interference from the husband.

In this respect China has gone further than many of the so-called democracies of Europe where discriminations against women still persist as legacies of the middle ages. According to Mrs Chow, the Chinese women have made amazing progress during the last twenty years and in spite of their limited resources the Government had been doing all in their power to speed up their education. The present struggle is bound to be a set-back though in another sense it has helped to bring Chinese women into yet another field of activity and thus finally annihilated all traces of their past servitude. Though many women were active in the people's cause during the revolution, of whom Madame Sun Yat Sen and Madame Chiang Kai Shek are two shining examples, this is the first time that Chinese women have come out to fight shoulder to shoulder with men.

Mr Chow narrated his experiences when he visited a women officers' camp in Canton. Most of them, he said, were high school students, many being even University graduates speaking several foreign languages. They are all being trained as military officers and after completing their course they are expected to train whole battalions of women soldiers. For, the most striking phenomenon of the present war is that instead of merely depending upon professional soldiers and thus consolidating a strong

military caste, the Chinese authorities are developing a people's army, and every peasant and every housewife is expected to use a rifle in self-defence. These women officers are subjected to the strictest military discipline, make-up and adornment being taboo for them. Nor are they taught only military drill but, like the Red Army, and the Spanish People's Army, they are also taught the rudiments of politics so that they know not only how to fight but also what they are fighting for. Such camps, I learnt, have been established in most provinces and in a few months time these women's battalions are expected to play an important part in the defence of their country.

From Mr and Mrs Chow I also learnt about the anxiety of the Chinese Government not to let the war interfere with education. All the Universities that have been destroyed in Shanghai, Peking, Nanking and other towns occupied by the Japanese have been re-opened in small towns and villages far into the interior beyond the range of hostilities so that they carry on their work even while the war is going on. Military training, of course, is compulsory and Mrs Chow added with a touch of sadness, "Is it our fault that now we have to include manufacture and use of explosives in our course of chemistry and teach war strategy to our students of geography?" This removal of the Universities to towns in the interior has been an indirect blessing. For, hitherto, all facilities for higher education were monopolised by the few big coastal cities and people living far away could not afford to send their children to these Universities. Now the Universities have gone to the people and have been established in rural areas, accessible to every farmer's son and daughter. As for the Chinese students' devotion to knowledge, the Chows told me how thousands

of boys who were the alumni of the northern universities marched thousands of miles on foot to the south-eastern regions where they have been re-established. On their way, these students went through villages, singing national songs, making speeches and firing the whole countryside with patriotic determination to fight the aggressors.

Very different from meeting the Chows was my interview with C D Alcott, hard-boiled, over-worked, perspiring American newspaperman, hearty and cordial in the manner of his tribe. It is difficult to keep record of his activities. He does so much. He works on the staff of the "China Press", the Chinese-owned American newspaper of Shanghai. He represents several American news-agencies and newspapers and broadcasts a daily review of the war situation from a Shanghai radio station which is controlled by American interests. It is amazing how he manages to do all this. We had a rather hurried conversation, as we had a snack in the Coffee Shop of the Foreign Y M C A. He, too, agreed that Japan is still very far from achieving a complete conquest of China and many things may happen before that. The Chinese guerrillas, he said, were still giving endless trouble to the Japanese and even in the areas which were supposed to have been annexed Japanese control very seldom extended beyond the garrisoned ruins of the towns. The Chinese are doing marvels under the leadership of Chiang Kai Shek who, Alcott thinks, is on the way to becoming the greatest Chinese of modern times. But he is not so sure about the power of the Central Government to keep peace in the country. Whether China wins or Japan, he insists, the country is heading towards a period of brigandage and anarchy. Too many people, he thinks, have got rifles, and

banditry is any day an easier occupation than tilling the soil. He admitted, however, that the odds are in favour of China holding on and that the Central Government is likely to come out more powerful and the nation more united than they have ever been before.

I learnt much about the situation in Shanghai and the happenings in the city during the initial stages of the war from young Woodhead of the Reuters who is the son of H G W Woodhead the editor of "Oriental Affairs" and the "China Year Book". Young Woodhead has learnt much from his father about China and is still young enough to take interest in things and events and not to take them for granted as some of the senior journalists are wont to do. He was in Shanghai when the war broke out and he vividly described those exciting days when shells would go whizzing over the International Settlement and not infrequently land in the busy streets so that no place was safe enough. The Settlement, it appears, was in the unhappy position of being between the rival firing lines and the Japanese, keen on gaining a speedy victory, did not mind taking a few risks of international complications. Woodhead, too, confirmed the impression I had that even around Shanghai the Chinese guerillas were giving a hot time to the Japanese army and the sound of machine gun firing that we could hear at night was a definite indication that Japanese control had been established only in name. He further told me about the recent activities of Chinese terrorists in Shanghai. The Japanese, it seems, have established a *Ta Tao* (the Great Way Government) in Shanghai, which is the imposing name they have given to their puppets who have been appointed to govern the conquered areas. These "Chinese Governments" are mainly composed of traitors and ex-criminals who are too ready to

sell their country to the highest bidders. Some of them happened to live in the Settlement too, and it appears that methodically, one by one, most of them have been killed. The rest of them have run away and taken refuge in the "conquered" territory of their Japanese masters.

It was from Woodhead that I learnt about Shanghai's "International Brigade", otherwise known as the Shanghai Volunteer Corps. These are all civilian Volunteers drawn from the various nationalities and communities that live in Shanghai. Thus there are in it British, French, Americans, Germans, Russians (White), Portuguese and also perhaps some Indians. In its varied and cosmopolitan composition it is perhaps second only to the International Brigade of Spain. This Corps, I learnt, had been very useful in keeping order during the troubled days when Shanghai was under fire.

I was curious to learn why only pro-Japanese news emanated from news agencies at Shanghai but I found that the Japanese had set up a press censor and no cables or telegrams could be sent without being passed by him. This is a clear infringement of the integrity of the International Settlement but I was soon to learn that it is by no means an isolated example. The Japanese have had much their own way in Shanghai. Hongkew which was a part of the Settlement is under Japanese military occupation to-day and hardly any protest has been made by the British and American authorities. Even the other parts of the Settlement are not immune from raids of Japanese soldiers who unceremoniously march in whenever they like on the pretext of searching for Chinese terrorists. A victorious Japan would make it hot for the foreign concessionaries and if the Chinese win, as I hope, there

is no reason why they should tolerate this anomaly In any case the International Settlement seems to be doomed And that strikes me as an apposite Shanghai Post-script

To-morrow I leave for Japan

*Foreign Y, M C A ,
Shanghai,
12th July, 1938*

THE NEO—IMPERIALISTS

"In view of Japan's geographical position the Powers should leave the maintenance of peace in the Orient in the hands of Japan which is now powerful enough to perform this duty. If the other powers fail to recognise the mission of Japan they may well be said to disobey the will of heaven."

—Excerpt from a pamphlet issued by the Japanese Navy Ministry in 1935

The morning of the 13th July found me in a taxi with my luggage passing through the half-awakened streets of Shanghai and heading towards the Japanese Empire. At the Garden Bridge which spans a narrow dirty creek I found a Highlander and a Sikh rather sulkily guarding this outpost of the British Empire. On the other side a rather nasty looking trio of Japanese soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets examined our car and, on making sure that there were no Chinese terrorists hidden under the seats, let us pass. At the same time a group of Chinese labourers forced by starvation (of which they bore evident marks) to seek some job in the territory of their enemies were unceremoniously asked to stand by while they were thoroughly searched one by one, the soldiers taking an unnecessarily long time going through the pockets of the solitary young woman in the dishevelled group. We drove on.

This is Hongkew and the Japanese flag which flies over almost every ruined building (rather symbolic, I think) constantly reminds you that you are in the Empire of the Rising Sun. Of course a few months ago this was a part of the International Settlement which, for all

practical purposes, was British territory. The sun has set at least on this part of the British Empire! The Japanese have taken it over without so much as an apology which, in their present mood, is not surprising. What is significant is that the British have let them do it.

We drive through miles of deserted streets, littered with debris. Hardly any building is intact. Large shell holes gape from every wall. We might be amongst the ruins of a long-forgotten mediaeval town and it is difficult to believe that less than a year ago it was a flourishing business quarter. Innumerable smokeless chimneys, many with tops blown off by shells, stand gaunt against the sky. Here and there groups of Japanese soldiers stroll by with an aggressive swagger. There are a large number of them at the quay to see off some of their officers who are going home on leave by the same boat. I had purposely selected a Japanese line to travel to Japan as I knew that would give me a further opportunity of studying these people.

From the deck I look back on the ruined city of Hong-kew. I see around me clusters of Japanese soldiers and officers, coarsened by much too recent experience of war. And when again I look at the ruins I have the sensation of being a witness to the cause and effect of a gruesome chapter of history.

The soldiers wear rather shabby and unimpressive uniforms. They do not even look well fed. Somehow I experience no hatred for them. Cannon-fodder, after all! One might, indeed, pity them. Many of them, I noticed, carried expensive cameras and I wondered. But I remembered some photographers' shops among the ruins we had passed on the road, and I wondered no more.

Punctually at 9 a. m. the ship sailed away and I had to give the Japanese credit for punctuality. In fact the admi-

mistration of the ship leaves little to be desired. The cabins are good and clean, the stewards smart and polite. I went to my cabin and found that I was sharing it with two other passengers. One is a junior British Consulate official going to the Japanese Alps for a holiday, the other a big, hearty Frenchman who has a wine business in Shanghai. We are rather an incongruous trio. But we get on very well and are soon faced with the Customs authorities who wish to examine our luggage. The forms we have to fill include one on which we have to give details of every single book and photograph we have got. I had been careful enough to bring no anti-Japanese literature with me. But my French friend got into trouble with his books which were all in French and since one of them was a history of the French Revolution the Customs Officer saw red and took them away, promising that they would be returned after a careful examination of their contents. The Frenchman shrugged his huge shoulders though later on he found considerable amusement in the fact that they had also taken all the wine lists and other books which had to do with the manufacture of liqueurs. We were all advised not to use our cameras at Nagasaki, the port where we were to land next day. It is a fortified zone and, as I found later, I did the wisest thing by locking my camera in my suitcase after it had been passed by the Customs Officer.

We had all then to appear before the Passport Officer who asked us to fill yet another huge form which required us to put down not only our name, profession, purpose of visiting Japan, but also father's name and mother's name. Moreover we were asked to state our nationality as also our race, but I was not allowed to write "human" in the latter column! It was the turn of a German woman

journalist before me and I heard the Passport Officer asking her what she thought of the Sino-Japanese war. She silenced him with such a prompt "That is what I would like you to tell me" that he refrained from repeating the question when my turn came.

On board the ship which was pretty full one could distinctly notice the new class of Japanese—military officers, administrative officials from Manchukuo and other "colonies" and ultra-patriotic young men who walked about with a pronounced swagger as if they owned the earth. Later on I was to find how unrepresentative they were of the real Japanese who, in spite of all the jingoistic cant they are made to believe, still retain much of that gentle and polite nature which was once their outstanding national characteristic. The neo-imperialists even talk the same jargon as the empire-builders of a century ago. They propose to civilise the Chinese (forgetting that all their boasted culture was principally borrowed from China), "develop" the country, build railroads and start industries. As an instance of their concern for the welfare of the Chinese people they point out that they would engage Chinese labour in their factories that they are building and that Chinese peasants are being encouraged to return to their fields in the territory occupied by Japanese forces. One of the passengers reminded me that on all their ships they had Chinese cooks. And I was instantly reminded of the British empire-builders who were quite happy and willing to employ "natives" in menial service so long as they behaved themselves and knew their place.

Among our fellow-passengers is another British consulate official, senior to the young fellow in my cabin, who is also proceeding to Japan for a holiday. This one is a

real "*burra sahib*", keeps himself aloof and never appears, however hot it may be, without being fully dressed. He is a character after Kipling's own heart, reads Edgar Wallace and Illustrated London News, can tell many a Cantonment tale and teaches his junior who has never been to India the difference between a *Chokra* and a "bearer". He was highly upset when his luggage was examined by the Customs people and seemed to regard it as an insult to the British empire.

Our cabin-fellow, however, has not been long enough in His Majesty's service to assume such airs. He is a mild, almost shy and self-conscious boy fresh from Cambridge and sees things from the point of view of a British Liberal. He is sorry for China and thinks the country was making good progress when the Japanese upset everything by the present war.

At lunch and later on at tea and dinner, I and the Frenchman find ourselves sharing the table with a young lady of rather exotic appearance. She says she is a White Russian, is most inquisitive about our plans, suggests hotels where we should stay in Japan, but would not tell us anything much about herself except that she would be in Japan for some months as it is too hot in Shanghai. The Frenchman later on tells me that he is sure he has seen her in one of the Dance Halls of Shanghai as a taxi-dancer and next morning we find her talking to an official in Japanese though the previous evening she had told us she did not know the language at all. We had, of course, no further proof except the exotic mystery which seemed to surround her, but I like to think that she was a spy. Was she?

After dinner we are shown some news-reels which mainly dealt with the war in China. Of course, only the

victories are recorded and we were shown Japanese troops in action, bombers starting out for their bit of work, Chinese cities in ruins and ashes, the Rising Sun flag flying everywhere. It was a disgusting parade of murder and carnage and most of the foreign passengers thought it rather a ill-humoured joke to inflict it as an after-dinner entertainment. Even the Japanese did not seem very enthusiastic about it all and sat in dumb silence.

Next morning we reached Nagasaki, the port where I had to catch a train for Kobe. It was then that we discovered that besides the officers we were also carrying on board the ashes of many wai victims. The quay was lined with soldiers and volunteers of the Women's Patriotic League who had come to pay homage to the remains of the dead heroes. Some of the military officials chose that moment to insult the foreign passengers in a particularly marked manner. We had all been standing on the deck, looking down on the impressive scene, and we had duly taken off our hats as a mark of respect to the dead. But we were all herded off into one corner and roughly warned not to look down until all the soldiers had got down the gangway. It seemed an unnecessary and humiliating procedure and gave us rather a sour welcome to Japan.

India Lodge

Kobe,

19th July, 1938

WHEN KOBE WAS DELUGED

"The huge military budget and the necessary increase of expenditure in the future are responsible for Japan's adverse trade balance. The programme, sponsored by the military, is too heavy to bear"

—"Ghugan Shogyo", leading Business newspaper of Japan, writing on 27th May, 1937.

On reaching Kobe I found the city strewn with debris of fallen houses as if it had been recently "Shanghai-ed" by aerial bombing. But it was only once that the Chinese aviators carried out an air raid on Japan and, then, it was a non-violent one so that they showered leaflets instead of bombs. The havoc in Kobe was caused by no enemy aircraft but by one of the severest floods ever recorded even in the history of Japan which has known many such calamities. The cables about this flood which had been sent out of Japan and which I had read in Shanghai, I found, had definitely understated the disaster. The Japanese authorities seem to be very reluctant to tell the outside world how much they have suffered from this flood and even in Japan those living in other cities have but a slight idea of the state of affairs in Kobe. But this disaster may well prove to be the last straw to break the financial back of Japan which had staked every penny on the war in China and was ill prepared for such a serious calamity. The decision to postpone the Olympic Games and the World Exposition was arrived at after the Kobe damage had been fully assessed and it was known that under these circumstances the Government (which has already been forced to draw on its gold reserve) would find it impossible to finance the arrangements for two such world events.

Outside Japan it is not fully realised how anxious and keen the Japanese Government and people were to hold the Olympics. It was an opportunity which they had intended fully to utilise in showing off their country and impressing the numerous visitors with the economic and military strength of Japan. Still maintaining that the war in China is but an "emergency" and an "incident", the Japanese Government dare not confess to the world at large or to their own people that the war has meant a terrible economic burden on the country. They were all along determined to hold these games as a "face-saving" device both at home and abroad. But the Kobe disaster has not only forced the postponement of these events but also exposed the steadily deteriorating economic conditions of Japan. Even Japanese papers admit that both export and import trade is practically at a standstill, the taxes are piling high (they are hundred per cent more than what they were one year ago) and though intensive jingoistic propaganda still makes the average citizen hold his head high, it is a question of time when the economic structure breaks down under the strain of the war. It won't be too soon, as for some time the desperate measures of national economy which are being propagated may succeed in postponing the crash. But ultimately it is bound to come.

One reason why the Japanese Government is so anxious to hide the full extent of this damage from their own people is that the disaster is assuming a rather disturbing significance to the superstitious folk in the towns and the country. Whispered mutterings are heard wondering whether this visitation of nature's fury is not divine justice meted out for the wrong done to China. No one will, of course, dare to say so openly but it is

evident that the superstitious nature of the people which the militarists have been exploiting so far in their own interests is now about to recoil upon them like a boomerang

While in Kobe, I watched the relief work being done with remarkable efficiency by the municipal authorities though even after fifteen days' labour the communications in the city had not been fully restored. I was deeply impressed by and must put on record my appreciation of the public spirit shown by the private citizens of Kobe, particularly the school students, who volunteered in their thousands to do relief work. The local Indian community, too, gave a commendable lead to the foreign residents by contributing its quota of volunteers under the leadership of Mr A M Sahay, President of the Indian National Committee of Japan. The Indian community in Japan and particularly in Kobe, I was glad to find, is well-organised, united and free from any communal or sectarian dissensions. Indeed, everywhere outside India one finds the members of the various communities living in perfect peace and unity. After staying for a day in a hotel I moved to the India Lodge which is an excellent institution run mainly for Indian students in Kobe. Of these there are about a dozen, studying either in technical institutes or receiving practical training in various factories. Among the students and the other members of the Indian community I detected a tendency to be over-impressed by everything in Japan which may, of course, be traced to a sense of our inferior political status.

But what is more unfortunate is that many of them are imbibing totalitarian ideals of Japan and a few are even unashamed supporters of Japan's aggressive policy in China. Mostly they are

under the influence of some exiled Indian patriots who seem to have been thrown into the arms of Japan by their antipathy for British Imperialism. After listening to their arguments I realised how easily Indian patriots are impressed by the militarist paraphernalia of uniforms, parades and flags and how necessary it is for us to guard against our national movement degenerating into Fascism. However, some of the students I met had a more balanced understanding of the situation in Japan. In their study of the country and the people they had gone deeper than the clux of chauvinist sentiment which a totalitarian government can artificially produce. They tell me how the mass of the people are really not enthusiastic about the war at all but they dare not utter a word against the militarists who are all-powerful in the country. I was going through the old files of a Japanese newspaper which is published in English and came across a news item to the effect that a man had been sentenced to several years rigorous imprisonment for whispering doubts about the China campaign to a friend in a tram car. The girl, who was sitting near him and reported the matter to the Police, achieved cheap heroism in the militarist circles!

I went to a cinema where they were showing some American picture along with news-reels. The dialogue in the picture was being rendered into Japanese by a loud-voiced attendant and I noticed how enthusiastic the younger section of the audience was about the film which was a cow-boy drama full of revolver shootings. Almost all the cinema houses showing foreign pictures select such films and the better class of American picture has hardly any market in Japan. The news-reel was full of the usual war scenes, depicting the triumph of the Japanese forces everywhere and as on board the ship here, too, I

noticed no enthusiasm at all on the part of most of the members of the audience, though now and then a solitary voice would make a half-hearted attempt to raise a patriotic slogan or two

Entertainment of a different variety is offered at Takarazuka, the Japanese Opera, a unique institution, situated midway between Kobe and Osaka. In the midst of beautiful surroundings they have built a whole town exclusively devoted to varied entertainment. There is a Grand Opera Theatre, a cinema house, a hotel and restaurant, swimming pool, base ball field and spacious lobbies full of all the gambling diversions that Japan has borrowed from America. The entire establishment belongs to a Japanese super-capitalist who, incidentally, also owns the railway line which connects Takarazuka with Kobe and Osaka.

On the whole Takarazuka struck me as a commendable enterprise. After all, why should Operas and Theatres be housed in crowded, ugly streets? Here you are offered three hours of stage entertainment in ideal surroundings at ridiculously cheap rates and if the owner makes millions every year on the establishment, he at least deserves it much more than the cinema-owners of Bombay and other places who charge you exorbitant prices and then herd you in over-crowded, ill-ventilated halls. The entertainment itself was good enough imitation of Broadway with the difference that here all the roles are played by girls. It was the usual musical comedy stuff and certainly Miss Japan has learnt the "swing" and can put over quite a passable imitation of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

From Kobe I made day excursions to Kyoto, Osaka and Nara. Kyoto was once the capital of Japan and is

noted for its old palaces and temples. Nara boasts of a huge woodland park in which thousands of deer roam about freely, over-fed by tourists with sweet biscuits which appeared to me to be the chief industry of the place. Other notable features of the place are a large number of Buddhist temples, one of which contains a huge brass idol of Buddha and the other has a bell of gigantic dimensions. What interested me, however, was that both the palaces of Kyoto as well as the temples of Nara show distinct traces of Chinese influence. Indeed much of Japanese culture as well as their language and script were once borrowed from China even as to-day in industrial and cultural spheres Japan is borrowing from Europe and America.

In Osaka are to be found most of the large scale factories. It is the industrial capital of the country. Most of the factories, I found, largely employ young girls as operatives because the wages for women are almost half of those for men and they can be made to work just as much. Moreover these girl workers are birds of passage, marriage being still the only goal of a Japanese woman's life, they leave the factory as soon as they have saved up a little and have managed to find a mate. The female percentage of population being in excess of the male and extreme poverty being prevalent in the countryside, it is never difficult to get a sufficient number of girls ready to work in a factory at a wage that is even lower than that in India and works out somewhere in the neighbourhood of six annas per day. Thus there is no large body of industrial proletariat, permanently linked up with factories, and that appears to me to be the only reason why Japanese workers have not offered any notable resistance to the anti-trade union laws. With the exception of tex-

tiles, it appears that most other industries are organised more on feudal rather than on modern capitalistic lines. Thus there are little workshops or cottage factories manufacturing some small articles or parts of an article which are then sold to a larger factory where they are assembled and exported. The initial manufacturing unit thus may employ only a few workers, possibly all members of the same family for whom the question of wages does not arise. Most of the profits of industry, in this way, go to the big exporters without their being bothered by labour disputes.

It is also interesting to note that the "Made in Japan" goods are dearer to buy in Japan than, say, in India. Is it because the exported goods are being dumped to capture the foreign markets or because more inferior material is used for exports than for goods for home consumption?

In Osaka I visited the office and press of "The Osaka Manichi" which has also a Tokyo edition called "The Tokyo Nichi Nichi". This is perhaps the largest newspaper in the east and has a circulation exceeding two million copies daily. It publishes twelve editions every day, one of them being in English. I went round the huge establishment which has about five thousand employees and was duly impressed by its army of Sub-editors, its private telephone and telegraph lines, the wireless and tele-photo department and the battery of high-powered rotary machines. I was informed that the paper has its own fleet of aeroplanes, runs a news-reel service and publishes a weekly paper for the blind. The editor was kind enough to present me a copy of "The Braille Osaka Manichi", though I suggested that I did not need it—yet!

Once before while landing at Nagasaki I had encountered a batch of Japanese journalists who, on learn-

ing that I was a newspaperman from India, insisted on interviewing me and asked me what I thought of the Sino-Japanese war and the "menace of communism in Asia". I had got rid of them by counter-interviewing them on these very questions. But in the office of "The Osaka Manichi", though I was honoured by being photographed, I was spared any inconvenient questions and was relieved to find that no bright reporter had thought of interviewing me. Imagine my surprise, then, on finding today a flattering paragraph about me in the paper which opens thus

"Displaying surprise and pleasure at conditions in Japan despite the emergency situation, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, correspondent of the Bombay Chronicle. visited the Osaka Manichi."

This time, I must confess, the joke is on me

*Railway Hotel,
Tokyo,
19th July, 1938*

CHERRY BLOSSOMS OR POPPIES?

"Isles of Blest Japan"
Should your Yamato Spirit
Strangers seek to scan
Say—scenting morn's sun-lit air
Blows the cherry wild and fair.

—Mootori, a celebrated Japanese poet
of the Meiji era

"It was an alluring civilisation that was built by Japan. If not based on aestheticism, still it was coloured, made more beautiful, entrancing by an artistry of the commonplace than all the poppies that bring poppy dreams. The Japan of other days was a world of cruelty, of savagery perhaps, in its stark nakedness of man's thirst for power. Thrown about its brutal truths of life floated a gossamer veil of sheer loveliness. This gossamer veil is shrivelling, has almost shrivelled, in the broad glare of the sun that streams out the West. It cannot be otherwise. The Japan of to-day is not, the Japan of to-morrow cannot be, that Japan of the retreating past."

—F H Hedges, until recently Special
Correspondent of London "Times"
in Japan

I was sorry to reach Tokyo several months too late for the Cherry Blossom season. With Fujiyama and Geisha, cherry blossoms are traditionally regarded as a national institution of Japan. These delicate white flowers which shoot out of bare leafless branches to greet the advent of the Spring have been the motif of so many decorative, though rather insipid water-colours (which,

thanks to the commercial enterprise of Japanese lithographers, may be seen in most Indian households) and every writer on Japan has waxed so eloquent in their praise that whenever someone mentions Japan we conjure up visions of flowery meadows covered with cherry blossoms amidst which, we imagine strolling groups of doll-like Japanese maidens in colourful kimono and with picturesque parasols. What I had actually seen on my way all along from Nagasaki to Tokyo was a fair enough land dotted here and there with green hills which help to relieve the monotony of the landscape. From a distance I was even fortunate to have a glimpse of the sacred Fuji-yama which, however, was rather disappointing for I had expected it to be a much loftier peak, something approximating to our Mount Everest. (Later on I found that many Japanese patriots imagine it to be the highest mountain in the world and once I was actually asked if we had any hills in India!) But I saw hardly any flowers and I don't wonder that they do not flourish near the railway track. Smoke from locomotives and from chimneys of factories is not the ideal fertilizer for delicate plants. (Mind you, I am not complaining. Personally, I am no poet and would rather have two factories to ensure a good standard of living for the workers rather than one flower garden for the idle rich to browse in.) What else did I see? I saw and marvelled at the gigantic net-work of railways which, I can say from personal experience, are run on the most efficient lines and ensure better comfort to the third class passengers than second class passengers get in India. I saw wooden poles carrying cheap electricity even to the remotest villages. But I also noticed Japanese farmers, men and women, with funny bamboo leaf hats on their heads, working in rice fields and dragging the plough themselves. That is because there is very

little live-stock in the country and the poor peasant (almost as poor as his brother in India) cannot afford to buy a horse or a bullock, much less a power-driven tractor. The establishment of collective farms with mechanical implements, I presume, are regarded by the rulers of the country as contrary to the anti-Comintern pact but that appears to me to be the only solution of the agricultural problem in a country where five and a half million peasant families share only 15 million acres of land and the average farm rent is 35% of the total produce! And when I saw at different stations battalions of soldiers on their way to the front being feted and glorified by patriotic citizens, I wondered what those peasants whom I had seen in the rice fields thought of this business of winning glory for the motherland on the battlefields of China, this business which is going to cost them about ten thousand million Yen!

But to come back to the much pleasanter topic of the cherry blossoms, I knew, of course, that the Spring in Japan is in April and May but I had associated these fragile flowers with something delicate and charming in Japanese character and I expected to see some manifestations of this "Cherry Blossom culture". It would be wrong to say that on the whole I did not find the Japanese people very charming and courteous—sometimes embarrassingly courteous!—and their homes clean and attractive. But I found evidence of a definite psychological change coming over them, which, in many respects, is very unfortunate and even alarming. I am not referring to their outward Europeanization—or, rather, Americanization. It will not distress me at all if the kimono (which, at best, has only a decorative value and is most ill-fitted for any kind of work) is totally abolished or if the plain-

tive and depressing classical Japanese music is lost in the medley of the latest jazz importations from America. It is all to the good if there are so many railways, trams, buses, taxis, good hotels, restaurants where prim blue-frocked little waitresses serve you with courteous efficiency, huge department stores where you may buy anything from a frying pan to a motor car. I don't mind if most of the professional and working men and women are using western dress. Indeed, I suspect the Europeans who bewail the steady disintegration of the old feudal (they call it picturesque) culture of Japan. I suspect them of being envious of Japan's industrial progress, wishing they had continued to wear silk kimonos and not donned workmen's overalls to run so many factories to compete with the European manufacturers. As I said, I welcome all this material progress and I maintain that although now the Japanese government is sponsoring a "Back to our Ancient Ways" movement as a part of its patriotic "spiritual mobilization", Japan is heading towards complete westernization. The change that I refer to is the transformation of a race of flower-lovers into a nation of jungoes ready to kill themselves and any other people who come in their way for what they have been taught by shrewd militarists is the glory of their motherland. There is, to my mind, something ominously symbolic in the action of the Japanese authorities in banning all festivities to celebrate the last Cherry Blossom season. They perhaps feared that such things may tend to soften the hearts which, by assiduous propaganda, are being hardened against any humanitarian appeal and filled with all those dangerous sentiments with which the Fascists are reviving the age of the cave-men and barbarians.

Outside Japan very little is known about the elaborate propaganda machine of the Japanese Government.

whose function it is to persuade the people to believe in the war cult. By means of newspapers, pamphlets, posters, films and even by patriotic themes subtly woven into stage plays and operas, a state of mind is being fostered, the potential dangers of which are not fully realised by foreigners. The "horror stories" about the alleged brutalities practised by the Chinese soldiery being circulated by official propagandists are reminiscent of the propaganda which was necessary to bring America into the Great War, while the misdeeds of the Japanese soldiers are carefully white-washed though only a few months ago General Iwane Matsui, Commander-in-chief of the Japanese forces in central China had to issue a stern warning to his men against excesses "which have particularly disgraced the good name of Japan abroad". Much capital has been made in Japan of the alleged anti-Japanese education being encouraged by Chiang Kai Shek in Chinese schools. Evidently the Japanese do not wish to be left behind. A friend of mine in Kobe, an Indian who speaks Japanese, asked a little school-boy coming home with a bundle of books on his back, "What do you think about the Chinese?" The boy promptly replied, as if repeating a lesson well taught that the Chinese were foul people and added a few choice words of abuse!

The propaganda bureaus attached to various Government departments and army units include among their staff "officer-poets" whose duty it is to write patriotic poems on every conceivable occasion. And so, if there is a victory they write verses to celebrate it whilst a defeat (never acknowledged as such publicly) is followed by elegies written to glorify the dead heroes. In spite of their strong antipathy for Russia the Japanese have at least learnt one thing from the Soviet Government--the use of pictorial posters. But

while the Russian posters mainly advertise collective farms and health resorts for workers, the walls of Japanese cities are plastered with vivid appeals for enlistment. The Japanese soldier is depicted in various triumphant poses, invariably holding aloft the flag of the Rising Sun empire.

I commend the following lines from "The Rising Sun March" by Kenji Arimoto to those Japanese who are never tired of repeating their peaceful intentions in China.

"It was the fall of last year that I was chosen
A defender of our state and raised the Sun Flag
Atop the enemy's fort, high up in the sky
Ahead of other forces' What a great triumph'
My glorious victory shall live for ever"

So, it is the old strategy of attack being the best defence! The brave defender of Japan has to cross the sea and raise the Sun Flag "atop the enemy's fort" in China! But there is no limit to the blind naivete of the patriots and I have met Japanese who, I am sure, sincerely believe that the Japanese forces around Hankow in the interior of China are there because the safety of Japan was threatened by the "Bolshevik" Chiang Kai Shek. Such are the wonders of propaganda. And Borodin must surely celebrate the Bolshevisation of Chiang!

It should not be understood, of course, that hundred per cent people in Japan really believe in the holiness of this war. But there is a veritable martial law in the country and even whispering doubts about the China war is punishable with rigorous imprisonment. Radical trade unions have been banned for years, any sort of radicalism brings one into trouble with the police. According to an American who has lived in Japan for many years, several thousand arrests have been made during the past one

year on political charges. In February there was a big round-up of hundreds of professors, students and other intellectuals who were suspected of holding "dangerous" opinions. As to what is a "dangerous" opinion, one may take the word of the Home Minister for it, who recently declared that "Liberalism is the hot-bed of communism." Even mildly democratic tendencies are thus branded as Bolshevik and severely punished. That there is a definite under-current of opposition is admitted even by the Japanese but the militarists have ensured that it shall not manifest itself.

As for the large mass of the people, either they have been duly doped by propaganda or they are afraid of voicing their feelings for fear of the police. The rapidly increasing taxes (the average man pays almost double of what he paid in 1936) are, no doubt, making the people feel the pinch of the war and, now that the pretence of its being a mere "incident" has been dropped by the Government and national economy put on a wartime basis, the troops marching through the streets are not so lustily cheered as before. My Indian friends in Japan told me that their Japanese acquaintances whose confidence they hold have often expressed to them their disgust of the whole business. But I doubt whether the people of Japan will ever dare to stand against the militarists. A Japanese student who did not seem very enthusiastic about the war revealed the attitude of the average man on this question when he said to me, "You see, we don't like the war but now that it has been started it shall be a great disgrace to our country if we lose. So we must go on fighting."

Theoretically, Japan is a constitutional monarchy with an elected legislature. But actually it is a totalitarian

regime, backed by militarists as in Germany and Italy and very soon I expect even the pretence of a parliamentary party system will be given up. The "One State Party" is, indeed, on the anvil. And whatever else the war achieves it certainly looks like establishing Fascism firmly in Japan. To trace the efforts of the militarists to gain complete control one must go back to over a year ago when many high army officials were killed by young subalterns. That, I am told, was not a sudden flare-up. The soldiers who are poorly paid are mainly recruited from the peasantry which has been these past few years in a most hopeless economic condition. Dire poverty prevails in the villages and the younger men in the army nursed a bitter grievance against the higher authorities for being responsible for the miserable condition of their people. That coup was a manifestation of this bitterness. It was quickly suppressed but it set the militarists thinking. Their task was two-fold: to establish their political position more firmly and to divert the attention of the army and the people to something else. The China "incident" provided the double opportunity and hostilities were begun without any formal declaration of war by the Parliament which was later on stampeded into financing the campaign.

Now, like most so-called democracies, the Japanese Parliament cannot be called really representative of the people. Elections are very expensive, the average cost per candidate being 50,000 Yen. Moreover the Home Ministry and the prefectural Governors control the elections. Thus only the rich can afford to get elected. The fear of dissolution which always hangs over their heads like the sword of Damocles with the prospect of another huge expenditure keeps them duly subdued and under the con-

trol of the Prime Minister who need not be the head of the largest party. Even this Parliament would have thought many times over before embarking on the mad venture of the Chinese war—but the militarists gave it no chance. Strange rumours may be heard in Kobe and Tokyo to the effect that even the Emperor was opposed to this war but was forced by the militarists to give his consent.

Once the war was started, the military bosses began capturing power in right earnest. The passage of the Government Bill for General Mobilization last February clearly shows their Fascist tactics. There was considerable opposition to the Bill from the Minseito, Seiyukai and Social Mass parties. In a strong speech Mr Saito protested against the Bill characterising it as "restricting people's right to existence" and condemning Fascism. The newspaper "Asahi", commenting on the Bill, declared that "the Cabinet has blundered". This was followed by the Anti-Comintern Defence Corps, the Japanese version of Hitler's storm-troopers, threatening to occupy the headquarters of the Minseito and Seiyukai parties if they did not agree to dissolve themselves, leaving only one party. A few days later two gallant members of the same Corps went and thrashed Mr Iso Abe, the 78-year old leader of the Social Mass Party. In both these cases it was openly alleged that the Home Ministry and the "higher-ups" were involved. But then the matter seems to have been hushed up. Soon after that, mysteriously enough, the Mobilization Bill was passed without an amendment! This is what on that occasion "The Japan Advertiser", an American-owned newspaper of Tokyo, had to say about it —

"The about face of the Lower House and subsequently the Upper House on the important Mo-

bilization Bill was most surprising and cannot be explained on the surface, for it is evident that this change of attitude was the result of behind-scenes negotiations which the public can only guess at. It may be surmised that the political parties were given to understand that if they did not fall in line with the Government's plans the latter meant to dissolve the Diet and that this might be followed up by the organization of a new party which would rob the present parties of much of their strength if not actually lead to dissolution."

Verily the gods of Fascism fulfil themselves in many ways!

The idea of One State Party, meanwhile, has been receiving vociferous support from the patriotic newspapers who plead for unity of action during the period of "emergency." If for the present the idea has not been officially carried through it has by no means been abandoned. Teisuka Akiyama, a rather mysterious personality and generally believed to be Premier Konoe's brain-trust was recently interviewed by a foreign journalist. He declared, "A state party headed by Premier Konoe is inevitable," and in reply to a further question added, "If Japan is turning Fascist, it is indigenous Fascism." He blamed Great Britain and the United States of America for their anti-Japanese attitude. "Japan helped Great Britain in the Great War—when Great Britain got what it wanted it chucked Japan like a pair of worn-out sandals. This Japan has never forgotten nor will ever forget." Asked to clarify his conception of the indigenous Fascism, he said, "Our Premier is one who does not do his own will but must be the most faithful interpreter of the will of

the Emperor who himself is the interpreter of the will of the Imperial Ancestors which is identical with the will of the people"

It is very confusing for a layman to follow Mr Akiyama's line of argument but what he has stated is the very spirit of Shinto, a super-religion based on the twin principles of ancestor-worship and emperor-worship which has been given recognition as a patriotic cult, so that every Japanese, be he a Buddhist, Christian or a member of any other church, has got to be a Shinto, too. Originally, it appears, Shinto was mainly concerned with Nature-worship, the chief deity being Amaterasu-Omikami, the Sun goddess from whom the Emperor is supposed to have descended. Later on it was given a political colour to ensure loyalty to the throne and the emperor was deified. Now the militarists are fully exploiting Shinto to further their own ends. A campaign for "spiritual mobilization" of the people has been launched for the three significant purposes of "exaltation of the Japanese spirit, Promotion and expansion of national customs, maintenance and strengthening of the support behind the guns". The practical programme to this end, which has been recommended to the people, includes such items —

- (1) Worship from a distance each morning of the Grand Shrine of Ise and the Imperial Palace
- (2) Visiting and paying homage to shrines and Imperial Mausoleums
- (3) Hoisting of national flag on national holidays
- (4) Commendation of loyal subjects, filial children and heroic women

Just as Hitler had to revive the racial superstition in Germany, the Japanese Fascists are making use of their

indigenous superstitions The ends are the same. to grab political power and give the masses a flag instead of bread

| The citizens of Tokyo are greatly encouraged to visit and worship at various patriotic shrines which seem to be as numerous as mausoleums round about Delhi or temples in Benares. Almost every homicide and suicide has been deified and among these shrines I did not find a memorial to any saint or scholar. It does appear that though (or because¹) the mass of the Japanese are a very mild people, they have always had a great fascination for soldiers. Thus the grave of every faithful retainer who died for his feudal lord is worshipped and the tombs of the "Forty-seven Ronins" who committed harakari, not bearing the disgrace of their lord, are regular places of pilgrimage. The glorification of the martial spirit finds its climax in Yasukuni Jinja which approximates to the Grave of The Unknown Soldier. Here are said to reside the souls of all the heroes of Japan who have died for their country since the Russo-Japanese war and parties of students from the Universities and schools are sent to worship at this shrine so that they, too, may be inspired to do similar deeds. It is a solemn place and as I stood before it and uncovered my head to honour the dead, I was filled with pacifist rather than patriotic sentiments. I sympathised with the poor soldiers who had to die in the cause of Imperialism or militarism. But I had no wish to follow in their footsteps even if I were assured that my grave would be worshipped. My reverie was broken by a white-robed Shinto priest, a clean shaven young man, who came and started talking to me in excellent English. I learnt from him that he was a University graduate but had chosen to be

a priest rather than anything else. He seemed very much interested in India and asked me a number of questions. It was a pity that owing to shortage of time at my disposal I could not have a longer talk with him, for he struck me as quite an intelligent young man and surely I could learn much from him about Shinto and its political as well as religious significance.

I came out of the sanctified precincts and just outside on the road there was the usual bustle of a great industrial city—trams and buses and taxis, tall buildings with elevators, soda fountains and department stores. Tokyo—indeed the whole of Japan—is a paradox where mediaeval superstition thrives in the midst of all the wonders of modern science. That is why it is the ideal country for European tourists who find here all the amenities to which they are used—an efficient railway system, good hotels, tourist bureaus with courteous attendants—and yet there is also something of the “mysterious Orient” which is just the stuff to thrill American spinsters and British “Orientalists” and curio collectors. But I do not believe in the glib boast that Japan has adopted the Western industrial technique and yet retained the simplicity and charm of Oriental culture. This so-called Orientalism is a deliberate exploitation of old superstitions which have been revived for Fascist purposes.

Next day when I boarded the steamer for America I found a packet awaiting for me from my friend the Shinto priest. He remembered that I was sailing by this boat and has sent me a brief history of the Yasukuni Jinja and some picture post cards. He writes, “What do you think about the scenery, people, customs and manners of Japan?”. How can I, after a casual one-week tour, give my opinion of a people, so charming and yet so enigmatic,

who love flowers and are extremely kind to strangers but who can be easily persuaded that the slaughter of a million Chinese is necessary for the glory of Japan? I have set down here my rambling impressions of the country and the people and have a mind to send a copy of this book to the Shinto priest who has been so kind. Perhaps when the next Cherry Blossom season comes he will remember me—unless, meanwhile, blood red poppy is adopted as symbol of a militant Japan and Cherry Blossom is banished for ever from the fair isles of the rising sun!

*SS "Hikawa Maru",
Somewhere between
Japan and Canada,
22nd July, 1938*

NOT SO PACIFIC

"Even if you are not sick, dirty weather at sea is an unpleasant thing I hate the fool who tells you he loves a storm and tramping the deck lustily vows that it can never be too rough for him When the woodwork groans and creaks, glasses crash to the floor and you lurch in your chair as the ship heels over, when the wind howls and the waves thunder against the side, I much prefer dry land '

—Somerset Maugham

I

It is Tuesday, July 26th, to-day So was yesterday In other words we have had a forty-eight hour day' It is not one of Ripley's famous "Believe it or nots" but a simple (?) geographical phenomenon that you gain one day when you cross the Pacific from west to east We had all read about it in text books in our elementary classes but it is a sad commentary on modern education that when the brief notice in our dining room announced that the next day, would be Tuesday, July 26th and the fact was confirmed by the repetition of the date on the breakfast menu cards next morning, not one out of three dozen passengers in our class could satisfactorily explain the reason why

How often, in the rush and hurry of modern life, do we wish that some special day could be stretched a little bit—say, to forty-eight instead of the usual twenty-four hours If it were possible, we tell ourselves, we could do many things that we have so often to postpone for lack of time Those letters that we have to write, the visit to the barber that we have been postponing for so long,

the film that we have promised to show the kids—we are sure we could do them all if only we had an extra 24 hours' And yet, my own sad experience is quite the reverse I promised myself to finish a lot of outstanding work during these two consecutive Tuesdays In fact I spent Monday lounging about and trying to learn Bridge from a fellow-passenger (though even after exasperating him for several hours I can't yet tell the difference between "two no trumps" and "Grand Slam"). On the first Tuesday I took it easy, finding every excuse to avoid work. After all, I comforted myself, there is no need to worry. There is a whole day extra, thanks to geography and navigation, and it would be sheer ingratitude not to take advantage of it. Was it not W H Davies who bitterly complained "We have no time to stand and stare". Well, here was the time to do that And so I stood on the deck and stared at the sea though there was not much to stare at It was foggy and the ship's siren shrieked repeatedly as we pierced our way through the thick solid wall of fog The next day as one got up, it was with a guilty feeling of having missed the opportunity of a lifetime and the more guilty one felt the lazier one became It is only now, after dinner, at the fag end of the day that I have started work But already the proteins and the vitamins and the carbohydrates of a heavy dinner are inducing one to sleep and the ship rocks slightly like the movement of a cradle and the distant chugging of the engines sounds like a sweet lullaby

*S S "Hikawa Maru",
Somewhere in the Pacific
26th (the second) July 1938*

II

The fog at last left us yesterday so that as we approach the coast of Canada we can distinctly see the pine-covered slopes of the hills. Everybody is on deck and all the Canadians are bubbling over with patriotic fervour, for to-morrow morning they will be home—Vancouver. More than half of our fellow-passengers will thus leave us and even for the rest of us it is practically the journey's end, for the next day we will disembark at Seattle.

It has been rather a tediously long voyage and no one is sorry that it is coming to an end. To begin with, for two days after we left Yokohama the sea was very rough and most of us did not even stir out of our cabins. The ship was tossed about by the mighty waves like a frail toy and I bitterly thought of the man who had called this the Pacific ocean. 'Pacific, indeed!' Then, when it had subsided a little we encountered a heavy fog and one did not know whether to spend the time in the over-heated cabins or shiver in the biting cold on the deck. One could not look ten yards beyond the ship. Day after day we went on like this, pining for a sight of land and glad to have anything to break the monotony. The life-belt drill which was held on a particularly stormy, chilly and foggy morning, to the accompaniment of repeated blasts by the ship's siren which sounded like desperate signals of distress, provided a brief but very welcome and almost thrilling interlude.

The passengers are quite an assorted company. There are Japanese, Americans, Canadians, Englishmen, White Russians, and one more Indian beside myself. Three Police officers from Shanghai—two Canadians and one Englishman—are proceeding home on leave. They all try

to look like Bulldog Drummond and read Edgar Wallace and "Sapper" One of them has a big album full of pictures taken by him during the Japanese invasion of Shanghai but when I talked to him I found that he had merely a pictorial rather than a human interest in this sordid drama of murder and destruction The reverse, however, is the case with two American youths, a girl and a boy who were two of a group of exchange students sent from American Universities to the Chinese university of Lingnam at Canton They have been through almost a whole year of air-raids but it speaks for their nerve that while most of their other comrades returned to America these two remained until the completion of the full term "Afraid of the war?", they said in answer to a query, "But that is why we had gone there We were keen to study China during this historic phase and the exchange student scheme gave us an opportunity" They are both confident of an ultimate Chinese victory and speak in glowing terms of the great role being played by the "Red" army not only in keeping the invaders at bay but in creating a social and economic consciousness among the mass of Chinese peasants

There is a White Russian amongst us who is a fur trader from Manchukuo on his way to America He tells me that the Japanese have put an embargo on all exports from Manchukuo and given monopoly of almost all internal and external trade to big Japanese concerns And yet in establishing Manchukuo they had declared that it will be an open country! Before leaving Japan I had read in a Tokyo paper of the big dividends that Japanese firms operating in Manchukuo are declaring Which should provide food for thought to those who cannot find any motive for Japan's policy of aggression except a mys-

tical notion of national glory. The story of all capitalist-imperialist adventures is the same—Trade follows the flag!

There are several Canadian, American and English missionaries on board. Most of them are coming from Japan while there is one couple from a small town in the United Provinces in India. I asked them what they thought of the new Government of U P and they had nothing but praise for it and held that the Congress ministry was surely doing much for the welfare of the peasantry. With one of the old missionary ladies from Japan I have been playing hide-and-seek throughout the voyage. She seems to suffer from a fixed notion that my soul must be "saved" and she loses no opportunity of impressing upon me the terrible consequences of not following the way of the Christ. I once told her that I considered myself a much truer follower of Christ than many of her English compatriots who preach Christianity and practise Imperialism. But she naively insisted that we must keep politics apart. I asked her about her work in Japan and she seemed quite hopeful. "Oh, you have no idea of how hungry those poor folks are for spiritual food", she said, attacking a big slice of cake. When I said that she must be finding her work of conversion difficult in view of the prevalence of the Shinto cult according to which all Japanese must believe in the divinity of the Emperor, she replied "Oh, we don't interfere with Shinto. We just preach the gospel without challenging the people's attitude towards their emperor." And I wondered what would have been the history of the world if Christ, too, had acted upon that "safe" policy.

But half the passengers, including the missionary lady, are getting down at Vancouver in a few hours. Seattle

is only a couple of hundred miles down the coast and my mind is filled with keen anticipation of what awaits me in the New World. The Captain has already given us a farewell party. The last mail to Japan, to be carried on the ship's return journey, has already been posted. It is good—bye to the Far East. America beckons!

*S S, "Hikaua Maru",
Approaching the coast of Canada
31st July, 1938*

Book Two

DISCOVERING AMERICA

IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY

'Does it seem unreasonable for me to say that I would like America better if its people were decently housed, decently fed, decently cared for? We can produce food enough, build houses enough'

—Granville Hicks in "I Love America".

America! What thrilling associations that name has! Columbus Pilgrim Fathers The Covered Wagon Gold Rush. Washington and Lincoln War of Independence and the Civil War Prosperity Skyscrapers New York Hollywood Millionaires Gangsters Platinum blondes

Even as in the dim light of an early dawn I looked at the town of Seattle—a big enough place as towns go in India but a hamlet as compared to what we know of New York—I felt strangely exhilarated There was power and vitality in the very air

My reverie was, however, soon disturbed when, heralded by a "Hello, brother!", I received a thump on the back I turned and looked at the first American I met in America He was a newspaper reporter-cum-photographer who had somehow discovered that I belonged to his fraternity and had proceeded to introduce himself in a forthright fashion that was typical of his profession as well as of his country His appearance, however, belied all notions that I had had of American newspaper men. He was no cigar-chewing, expensively dressed handsome young reporter of the movies In his shabby appearance and wild hair he rather resembled a certain popular Trade Union leader of Bombay. Talking to him I felt quite at home and enjoyed his ready humour. After questioning me about my academic qualifications he

exclaimed "Oh, I am a graduate, too" and when a friendly Customs Official interjected, "Harvard or Yale?" he promptly replied, "Neither, I graduated from the side-walks of New York." In a reminiscent mood he added, "Oh, yes, Sir I know my New York, even the fashionable New York I sold newspapers on Fifth Avenue when I was a kid" I have seldom met any one with such obvious pride in his proletarian life as this old man who went about dragging his load of camera and tripod, his seedy rain-coat flying in the wind,—a mocking caricature of American "prosperity"

In setting my foot on the American soil at Seattle instead of at New York I seem to be "discovering" America from the wrong angle There I would have been greeted by old woman Liberty holding aloft her torch, while here I was welcomed by this bedraggled journalist holding aloft his flashlight apparatus Expensive symbolism and living reality The statue of Liberty, I read later in the papers, will be renovated (I had almost said rejuvenated) at a cost of several million dollars My journalist friend and dozens of old, wrinkled workmen I saw on the wharf need a few dollars for a bath, shave and a new suit of clothes An Indian journalist does not need to be told what poverty is But somehow the sight of men in Seattle walking about in rags, crippled ex-soldiers begging in the streets by the traditional method of selling matches, slum children with hollowed cheeks working as shoe-shine boys, came as a distinct shock For, with America we associate prosperity and affluence just as with India we associate poverty! Perhaps I did make a mistake in getting down at Seattle instead of New York

The same afternoon I took the train to Los Angeles and tried to smother puzzling and disillusioning economic

realities by visions of Hollywood (Isn't that what Hollywood aims at?) At the station I noticed that the huge locomotives that haul the trains carry a big bell on the top which goes clanging all the way. It was then that I was reminded of the romantic past of America—early railroads penetrating the forests, herds of untamed cattle roaming over the countryside, frightened out of their wits by the approach of this iron monster with a clanging bell. The landscape we were passing through was certainly conducive to such thoughts. Mile upon mile of pine-covered hills with their untold wealth of timber, huge lumber factories and saw-mills after every few miles, big cattle ranches with cow-boys looking picturesque on horseback, dairy farms, sheep farms, fields of maize—this looked more like the country of George Washington than Ford America.

Next morning when we entered the State of California we were still in the picturesque pine area. The engine laboriously puffed up the slopes, took us through tunnels and over perilous precipices and lo, there was Mount Shasta in all its snow-covered majesty! The Californians in the train patriotically enthused over it and the non-Californians pretended not to notice anything particularly beautiful about "that dirty little ant hill, you mean." I enjoyed the exchange of pleasantries on the subject of the mountain and declined to accept the position of umpire which both sides kindly offered me. It all reminded me of the sometimes amusing but often absurd provincial jealousies that exist in our own country.

From Seattle right down to Los Angeles I was impressed by the enormous expanse of this country, its unlimited natural resources as also by the commendable enterprise and resourcefulness of the pioneers who had set

out to make themselves a home in America. But as for miles and miles the train rolled on through fertile but uninhabited land I wondered why petty considerations must keep out more people from migrating here and utilizing the abundant resources of nature. It is "God's Own Country" and there is space enough for Red Indian, American as well as the immigrant from Europe and Asia. There were hardly any big cities on this thousand-mile stretch, and it was only now and then that the train stopped at small hamlets populated by farmers or lumberjacks. Everywhere you saw unmistakable signs that here was a country that had not ceased to grow and though the present depression, caused by an irrational system of distribution, has been pretty severe, the country is full of natural wealth and the people are full of vitality and the urge to "do things and go places". As we roared on our way to the south and, after negotiating a patch of arid desert, came in the neighbourhood of Los Angeles we saw huge fruit orchards—oranges, peaches, apples. Nature has been bountiful, there is enough fruit for all to eat in California, but the profit motive system decrees that thousands of tons of fruits be left to rot rather than allow the price to come down. Is it nature's fault that an orange costs ten cents in California so that the poor families who help to grow this fruit must go without it?

And now here I am in Los Angeles. From to-morrow I begin my pilgrimage to the shrines of Hollywood, though it has been rather disillusioning to discover that the movie capital of the world has no better status than that of a mere suburb of Los Angeles. Meanwhile I have had a look round the city which seems to have more Real Estate Agents sellings acres of desert land to gullible prosperity-hunting folks than film-producers, and far more churches than cinema houses. Los Angeles (and particu-

IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY

larly Hollywood) had once the reputation of being the home of the most religious-minded community in the whole country. There are all kinds of new churches, besides the old established ones, and all of them seem to be well attended. It is the home of many pseudo-religious and spiritual movements (with such names as "Mighty I am movement") and even Indian Swamis do flourishing business. During the worst days of the depression, I learnt, churches did not suffer financially, on the other hand they drew bigger crowds with bigger donations! The churches, it must be conceded, have thoroughly modernized themselves and offer a varied programme, sometimes including free movies. The sermons which are on such "spiritual" topics as "How to enjoy your Vacation without spending Money" are advertised by huge posters just like film advertisements. Even the language has something of that touch which is the studio-publicist's contribution to literature. "Vibratory Healing That Heals and Uplifts", sounds as picturesque as "Greta Garbo Who Gravitates Glamour".

In every room in every Los Angeles hotel there is a Bible placed by the Christian Commercial Men's Association of America with this slogan inscribed on each copy, "A Bible in every hotel guest room. Winning Commercial men for Christ". From my window, as I write this, I can see a huge cross picked up in flaming neon light over a church. The top of the Bank building carries the luminous message "Christ Saves". Not far away is a still bigger sign advertising the latest Hollywood dance and song sensation.

This is "God's Own Country!"

*Downtown Y M C A ,
Los Angeles,
4th August, 1938*

SEVEN DAYS IN HOLLYWOOD

"From this quaint suburb are exported to the world Hollywood kiss-close-ups, twaddle and glycerine tears, filling Hollywood pockets with gold and the minds of humanity with libidinous thoughts or no thoughts at all."

—Cedric Belfrage in

"The Promised Land"

Hollywood! The very name spells glamour and romance to millions of film fans all over the world. Imagination, aided and abetted by the photogravure section in fan magazines, has endowed the movie capital of the world with every conceivable quality of beauty and perfection. We think of it as a magical city populated by Beauty Queens and dashing He-men, bevies of beautiful belles in elegant costumes walking about the streets, displaying their physical charms in abbreviated swimming costumes on picturesque sea beaches or in marble swimming pools. In short an all-pervading atmosphere of beauty, romance and luxury. The Persian couplet inscribed in the Moghal fort at Delhi might as well have been a post-dated tribute to Hollywood:

"If there be heaven on the face of earth

It is this, it is this, it is this."

Fed on such attractive illusions, naturally there is in each one of us a keen desire to see Hollywood. I was obviously excited as the train, after passing through miles and miles of citrus gardens, orange groves and gasoline stations, steamed into the Los Angeles railway station. (I knew, of course, that there is no station by the name of Hollywood). Another train came in on the opposite side just as I stepped out on the platform. I noticed a small group

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of reporters, photographers and publicity men surrounding a little curly-haired girl—Shirley Temple.

Outside the station a few passengers and porters collected out of curiosity to look at the child-star who was quickly driven away in a powerful limousine. Two hours later when I looked at the early afternoon papers Shirley Temple's return from a holiday tour was blazoned on front pages. The small group at the station was now exaggerated into "a huge crowd of fans and admirers". Hollywood, thy first name is Publicity!

I am installed in a small room on the seventh floor of the Downtown Y. M. C. A. From my window I can see the busy Seventh Street with its interminable double row of cars—big cars, small cars, black cars, red cars, lavender colour cars, sports cars, streamlined cars, cars with musical hooters, police cars with shrieking whistles (reminding one of all the gangster films one has seen), cars gleamingly new and cars obviously old. There is little doubt that I am in Ford America at last.

After 46 hours in the train, I have no energy left to start on a tour of investigation right away. I read the first batch of letters from home that I got since leaving India, write letters to a few people in Los Angeles to whom I have introductions and take a little walk along the Avenue. An early dinner and early to bed. Tomorrow will be my first day in Hollywood.

FIRST DAY

I try to find what is Hollywood

The day is bright and warm. Almost like Bombay. There are no replies or 'phone calls from the various

studios to whom I had written intimating my desire to look them over. Maybe they will take some time in replying. Maybe they are not interested in an Indian journalist. Before leaving Bombay the Indian representative of United Artists refused to give me an introduction to the Goldwyn Studios. And yet his assistants come and pester me almost every alternate day trying to get in some free publicity in the "Chronicle". The representatives of other studios were not very obliging, either, though some of them promised to write direct to Hollywood about me. Evidently they haven't

I start on my own to have a look round, and cover a good bit of the town by taxi, bus and tram. It appears to be a pretty big city, about the size of Bombay, with buildings going up to about twenty stories, fairly clean, with streets crowded with people and cars—evidently more cars than people. The city extends for miles, so that a car is essential to cover the huge distances. Beyond the city on either side are pretty little suburbs which remind me of the better portions of Khar and Santa Cruz—prim bungalows, gardens and palm trees.

Before coming to Hollywood I was quite prepared for all manner of incongruities and paradoxes. I expected—indeed, looked forward—to see strange things in the world's movie capital. During my round of the city I was not surprised to see handsome young men going about in flowery silk shirts or shop girls who looked as if they were either twin sisters of Claudette Colbert or went to the same beauty parlour as the famous star. One might have known there would be institutions like the "College of Beauty" in a town which has done more than any other place to put feminine charm on the stock market as a commodity for commercial exploitation. It is only natural

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that there should be huge posters and neon signs boosting the latest films, though it was a little bit of a shock to see grave-yards and "funeral parlours" advertised in a similar manner.

ACE NO - 2835

But, then, "Say it with beauty" has long been the slogan of Hollywood which has taught the world that you can sell anything—from tooth paste to a coffin, from chewing gum to ammunition—if you put a pretty girl on the advertisement. Nor did it surprise me to find Drive-in cafes where young aspirants to film fame serve you food in a tray clipped to the side of your car. I have seen them in too many films about Hollywood. The Drive-in Cinema is the latest evolution of the same idea and it is amusing to reflect that sophisticated Hollywoodites prefer to see the movies under the sky even as the Indian peasant does when a travelling cinema comes to the village with ancient silent films.

The movie influence is naturally evident everywhere and there are cafes where meals are served in caves made of sacking and plaster like studio "sets". The film stars are a cosmopolitan crowd and restaurants with a foreign flavour do a roaring business. "A little bit of Sweden" draws crowds of Garbo-fans who hope to find their goddess but never do.

What is Hollywood? Before I came here I was often intrigued by this question. I had read somewhere that there was no town called by this name, not even a railway station or a post office. That is true, I find now, but it is wrong to think that Hollywood had never any geographical existence. There was a "City of Hollywood"—once! But in 1910, about the same time that the first movie studio was set up in the town, Hollywood

voted itself out of existence and became a suburb of Los Angeles (The full story of Hollywood may be found in Cedric Belfrage's excellent novel "The Promised Land" which I finished reading only today)

Until then Hollywood was a quiet little town inhabited by a prosperous Christian community Prohibition was locally enforced and the Hollywoodites were so respectable that they greatly resented the intrusion of the movies One of the more "respectable" citizens, it is recorded, was so incensed at the "immoral" activities of the movie folk that he took out his shot gun and fired at a party of film actors on location in his neighbourhood. Actually Hollywood was almost the last town in America to have a cinema house But the movie-producers, squeezed out of New York for want of space for their studios, had migrated to California where there was not only land in abundance but also sunshine and variety of natural scenery Little did the residents of Hollywood realise at that time that "in their midst a strange new world was being born, a world wherein show folk, the eternal gypsies wandering down the ages, would at last be able to hang up their hats, cast out the anchor, and gird their loins with the raiment of respectability"

The prejudice of the Hollywoodites against the movies was, however, soon broken down by the rising tide of prosperity that film studios brought in their wake Land values soared and the older citizens who had been sitting tight on their bits of land cashed in millions by selling them to movie-producers In due course the films became the greatest show industry of all times, make-up artists and publicity experts built shadow gods and goddesses who brought in billions to the coffers of the producers and, in their turn, claimed and got fabulous salaries

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Hollywood is to-day the most well-known town in the world. It has become more than a town. It is a tremendous force. Meanwhile most of the studios as well as the stars have moved out of Hollywood. The little suburb has proved too small to accommodate the huge centres of film production. Except for a few, all the prominent studios—the Warner Brothers, the Universal, the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer—are situated far from Hollywood. Distances as large as fifteen miles divide them from each other. Yet they are all in Hollywood! Thirty per cent of total film footage in America is produced in New York, over three thousand miles away from California, but the world accepts it all as Hollywood productions. Hollywood has outgrown geographical boundaries. It is a tradition, it is an atmosphere. I have not yet been inside a studio but I already seem to sense this atmosphere.

SECOND DAY

I make an interesting acquaintance and dine at the world's strangest restaurant

No longer feel desolate and forlorn. There has been a phone call from Doctor Markovin, asking me to see him at the University and another from Syud Hosain, asking me to lunch with him. Doctor Markovin is the Head of the Department of Cinematography at the University of Southern California to whom I brought a letter of introduction from a friend of mine who had known him when he was studying cinema technique in Hollywood. The Doctor proved to be a jolly old soul full of cordiality and ready to oblige me in every way.

While talking to him, I happened to make a most interesting acquaintance in a truly amazing manner. I

met Ram Bagai. He is an Indian boy who has lived all his life in the U S A as his parents had migrated here when he was a mere child. He has just graduated in cinematography and appears to have been one of Doctor Markovin's favourite pupils. It appears that when I was talking to the Doctor his secretary telephoned to Bagai telling him that a man from his country was here and he came straight in his car. As he is leaving tomorrow for New York in connection with some business, Doctor Markovin left me in charge of Bagai.

From the University I drove with Bagai to his flat where he stays with his mother, a kind old lady who is as happy as her son to meet someone from the old country. Twenty years of stay in America has not made her forget her gentle and hospitable Indian ways and she insists I must take every possible meal at their place. As she keeps a lot of condiments in the house and cooks Indian dishes, I am naturally only too glad to accept her invitation.

Within an hour I and Bagai are like old friends. He has been doing a bit of journalism, too, writing to some Indian film magazines on Hollywood matters. His ambition is to qualify himself fully as a film director in Hollywood and then return to India to serve the film industry of his own country. Having graduated from University, he is now arranging to get practical training in some of the studios.

Back at the Y M C A I find Mr Syud Hosain waiting for me. He was only recently in India on a short visit when I had met him in Bombay. For the last one decade he has been doing journalism and lecturing in America on Indian affairs and is now a professor at the University of

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Southern California where he lectures on Indian history and civilization. It was a pleasure to lunch with him as he is a brilliant conversationalist and is a keen student of world affairs. Once a leading journalist and national politician in India, he still keeps himself abreast of trends in Indian politics and we had a long talk about the recent developments in India and the Far East.

Spent the evening in a cinema and was surprised to see that even in Hollywood people have to be persuaded to see films by double-feature programmes and lucky number prize schemes.

Dined at Clifton's, perhaps the world's strangest restaurant. It is run by a man with considerable means and strange philanthropic ideas. Here you may eat without paying anything or pay just as much as you like. "Don't pay unless you are satisfied" is their slogan and judging from the crowds that I saw, it serves as an excellent advertisement. I learn that hardly five persons out of a thousand refuse to pay their bills. Which seems to confirm the essential goodness of human nature. Or does it?

THIRD DAY.

I learn about Indians in California and see a Swedish Film

Went to Bagai's place and found that some of his relations had arrived from San Francisco. One of them is a lady doctor who, I am told, has a flourishing practice. Her brother is a merchant and imports curios, etc. from India. Had a long talk about Indians resident in California. It appears there are in all about two thousand of them, most of whom are farmers scattered all over the state. Before the American Government put a ban on further immigra-

tion of Asiatics, there was a far greater number of Indian settlers living on the West Coast who had migrated from India owing to steadily deteriorating prices of agricultural commodities

It speaks of their adventurous spirit and enterprise that many of them landed on the American soil without knowing a word of English And yet they had soon established themselves as useful citizens, honest and hard-working Together with the Japanese, they should be given credit for having brought prosperity to California They grew corn and fruits where none had grown before and laid the foundation of agriculture in Western America They had committed the mistake, however, of having come without their families so that when further immigration was stopped, most of them feeling home-sick for their wives and children returned to India Many, on reaching old age, died Some married and have permanently settled down in California and other western states A few live in Los Angeles, working occasionally in Hollywood studios as extras in Indian and eastern films

Drove round the city, along Hollywood Boulevard, saw the Grauman's Chinese theatre which looks like a pagoda and where many important films have their premiere In front of the theatre, in cement, are the prints of stars' hands and feet and also their autographs That is about all the immortality they will perhaps get Had a snack at the Brown Derby, the world-famous restaurant which is shaped like a hat Queer shaped restaurants are very popular here, and there are some resembling a shoe, a bowl, a cup of tea, a bottle of wine, etc

Through the Will Hays office, Bagai has arranged visits to some studios for me and tomorrow I go to Walt

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Disney's studios, the home of my old friend and favourite, Mickey Mouse.

At night saw a Swedish film that is being shown in a nearby cinema. It has English sub-titles. It is of special interest to Americans as it tells the story of a Swede who came over to America and played a great part in the American Civil War. When will they show Indian films here?

FOURTH DAY.

I visit the home of Mickey Mouse and am interviewed by a reporter

The first studio I visited in Hollywood has no stars, at least no live ones. Yet the Walt Disney Studios proved most interesting and we spent over two hours looking over every department, guided by courteous attendants. The Publicity Department, presided over by a charming young lady, was most helpful and we were given every facility to study the intricate process of making cartoon films.

Basically, the production of an animated cartoon film seems simple enough. It was, however, only after looking over the Disney studios that I realized what an amount of planned effort goes into each of those jolly little films which fascinate old and young alike all over the world. It is sometimes imagined, for instance, that a couple of dozen draughtsmen and artists are all that are employed for the production of such films. Actually, the studio has on its staff over five hundred individuals including artists, painters, colour experts, story-writers, scenarists, cameramen, sound recordists, laboratory technicians, special effects experts, set-makers—and even actors and actresses!

That is the most surprising thing, as no one ever sees live humans in a Disney film. These artistes are employed

not only for duplicating the voices of the cartoon characters but also to serve as models so that the artists who make the drawings can study their movements of body. Thus there is a regular sound-proof studio, too, where live actors and actresses may be seen working in films which are never shown in a public cinema. These films are only meant to help the animaters.

The Disney studio is a huge organization much bigger than any of our major Indian studios. Three features impressed me greatly—the Library which contains thousands of books, mostly fairy tales from all over the world which may be helpful in planning future productions, the Art School which is attended by all staff artists so that they don't lose grip on their technique and the Casting Department which tests hundreds of persons every year to find the proper voices for each of the animated characters. It took two years, I am told, to find the perfect voice for the role of Snow White. In the case of old established characters such as Donald Duck, the Goof, Pluto and Clara Cluck, the individuals who lent their voices to these characters are under permanent contract to the studio. And, believe it or not, Walt Disney himself is the voice of Mickey Mouse !

On returning from the Disney Studios, I called at the office of the "Los Angeles Times", the leading local paper, which issues about six editions during the day. A smart reporter thought he could make a "story" out of me. But I am a reporter myself. He asked me questions. I asked him questions. Result—a most interesting talk between two journalists who refused to say the conventional things the "interviewed" class of celebrities are expected to say. The "Times" reporter asked me what was the most astonishing thing I had seen in U.S.A. I told him, "That your morning

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newspapers come out at sunset and evening papers are sold from 10 a.m." He promptly replied "The reason is we American newspapermen are so fast sometimes we are ahead of time." He asked me about Mahatma Gandhi and the National Congress, I asked him about Roosevelt and the difference between Democrats and Republicans.

Then he took me to the photographic department where I was to be photographed. The reporter and the cameraman held prolonged consultations as to what was the best way of photographing me. They thought of a globe and a map, they wondered if I should wave my hat to say "Hello" to America, and I felt most self-conscious and embarrassed under the glare of the arc lamps. Ultimately I was handed a copy of the Los Angeles "Times" and asked to "Smile, pardner" which, to the best of my ability, I did.

The "Los Angeles Times" which is a reactionary paper has a circulation of 250,000 and has tremendous capital at its back. It is the organ of the cigar-chewing plutocrats of the West coast. It has a huge establishment, running up to over a dozen stories, a staff numbering thousands and practically every reporter has a car of his own. It can afford to kill every other paper which dares to compete. The workers' solitary paper published from San Francisco, "Peoples' World", finds it difficult even to make an appearance on the newspaper stalls. It is the same story all over the world.

FIFTH DAY.

*I see "Gungadin" in making, meet Upton Sinclair,
Broadcast a talk and listen to Symphonies
Under the Stars !*

This has been a heavy day, indeed !

After breakfast, went with Bagai to the R.K.O.—Radio

studios where we were courteously received by the Foreign Publicity Manager. Discovered it to be a huge establishment, with more than a dozen sound-stages. Two studio floors were occupied by "sets" for "Gungadin", a film based on a poem by Rudyard Kipling, who has inspired so much Imperialist propaganda. I know Kipling's poems and I also know Hollywood and naturally I am curious about this film. I learn that actual shooting is going on at the moment on an out-door location several hundred miles away, where a whole Indian town has been built.

One of the two "sets" I saw in the studio represented a temple, a passable imitation of Elephanta—and the "Thugs" of the North West Frontier are supposed to worship here! The other one was an elaborate torture chamber with a small tank which would be filled with snakes. Here, I believe, the brave White soldiers would be tortured by the black-hearted "natives." But actually it reminded one more of the tortures of inquisition of mediaeval Europe than of anything ever heard of in India. From all this I can imagine what type of film "Gungadin" would be and I and Bagai try to tell the Publicity Department people that a film on these lines would be a slanderous attack on India. But evidently these poor boys have nothing to do with the business which has been entrusted by the "higher-ups" to four retired British military officers who are acting as Technical Advisors, on the recommendation of the British Embassy in Washington.

The knowledge about India that these worthies possess can be gauged from the fact that when the original cast was selected they thought "Water Boy" meant a child and, therefore, a boy of eight or nine years was sought to play the role. It was only later that they realized their mistake and got Sam Jaffe (who played the High Lama

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in "Lost Horizon") for the title role. It is a pity that an actor who interpreted the sublime philosophy of the East in his earlier film should now lend his talent for the villification of India. In spite of the courtesy shown by everyone we met in the studio, the visit to the R.K.O.—Radio left me a little sad, reflecting upon this tragedy that a friendly people like the Americans should be allowing themselves to be used as tools of British Imperialism!

From the "Gungadin" sets at the R.K.O.—Radio studios to the modest little cottage of Upton Sinclair in Pasadena, one of the suburbs of Los Angeles, proved a most refreshing change. Ever since my school days I have kept in my mind a list of authors I would like to meet personally. Every now and then names are struck off this selected list and new ones added. Some of my greatest favourites have "betrayed" my confidence.

Beverley Nichols whose "Twenty-five" and "Cry Havoc" had made a great impression on me no longer interested me when he wrote "News Of England" and manifested pro-Fascist tendencies. H. G. Wells forfeited his place for not daring to denounce imperialism and for remaining neutral on the Spanish question. Bernard Shaw whose plays I had once read with religious fervour fell from his high pedestal when I came to know of his colossal studied conceit. An author without humility, however brilliant, could not be my favourite.

G. K. Chesterton I continued to love, in spite of his Catholic beliefs, for his characteristic humanity and sense of humour as much as for the gem-like purity of his style. It had always been my ambition to meet him and the news of his death came as a personal shock to me. With G.K.C.

gone, very few authors were left on my list. High up, among these has been the name of Upton Sinclair, ever since in my High School days I happened to read his "Jungle."

In reply to my letter, Sinclair had written asking me to call early in the afternoon. Bagai having consented to accompany me, we drove to Pasadena in his car. We knew only the postal address of our host and Pasadena turned out to be a big enough town. But the first man we met in the street, an old worker in shabby clothes, was able to direct us to the place and was evidently proud to know the house of the greatest citizen of Pasadena.

Ever since 1934, when he stood for the Governorship of California with the declared object of introducing socialism in the State and got defeated by the combined opposition of capitalists including most of the motion picture magnates, who poured millions into a campaign of villification and slander to keep the Socialist out of office, Sinclair is known to most of the workers and common people of California, to whom his candidature had held a hope of escape from the grip of monopoly capitalism. I was not surprised when I heard from Bagai that every Indian in California had supported Sinclair, for they knew this man suffered from no racial complex and would safeguard their interests like the interests of all other citizens.

Upton Sinclair who was waiting for us turned out to be an American edition of Mahatma Gandhi. Of course he is not so short and thin, nor was he clothed in a loin cloth. But he has the same penetrating eyes behind the glasses and the same air of unaffected simplicity. He was dressed in a cheap pair of linen trousers and an undervest instead.



LOUIS BROMFIELD
and daughter.

UPTON SINCLAIR
and the author



ETHEL MANNIN

She wrote "Confessions and Impressions"—and the Preface to this book!



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of a shirt, the most sensible clothes to wear in the heat of the Californian afternoon, and we felt self-conscious and over-dressed in our carefully pressed suits and ties and collars

But one cannot be self-conscious for long in the presence of Upton Sinclair, who has got the knack of all truly great men to put one at his ease. Within a few minutes we had removed our coats, opened our collars and, lounging on wicker chairs in a shady corner of the garden, were enjoying iced orange juice which our host had thoughtfully kept ready for us. It was difficult to imagine that this unassuming obliging man, showing such consideration to an unknown Indian journalist, was the author of sixty best-sellers, each of which has run into several editions and has been translated into practically every known language of the world.

Upton Sinclair is not one of those Americans who think India is a land full of fakirs, maharajas and cobras. In fact his knowledge of the Indian political situation astounded me. The first question he asked me was, "You must be a nationalist, of course, but do you incline more towards Gandhi or Nehru?" When I told him that, like most young men in India, the practical socialism of Nehru appealed to me more than the mystical idealism of the Mahatma, he launched into a discussion of the relative strength of Right and Left forces in India, the ideological differences between the Congress Socialists and Communists and the possibility of evolving a united front of all radical elements.

His knowledge of world affairs is truly amazing, but not so incredible when one realizes the amount of reading he does. Every room in his cottage is lined with books.

There are books lying about on tables, on the floor, on the divan. Then there are dozens of periodicals and newspapers which come from all over the world, not to mention the large number of letters he receives from his readers in every country. Even a front rank star would envy such a huge amount of "fan" mail.

It is thus that Sinclair keeps in touch with progressive movements throughout the world and is able to give something new and purposeful in every book of his. I was astounded to learn that he wrote "No Pasaran", that inspiring story of the International Brigade, without having visited Spain, depending for "authentic" details on books, newspaper reports, maps—and his imagination. This book alone has been translated in almost twenty languages and the Republican Government of Spain, I learnt, are producing a film of it.

I was interested to hear of his experience of film production. Long ago, it appears, some producer wishing to cash in on his increasing popularity purchased a story by Sinclair. It was, like all his works, purposeful fiction, an attempt to use the screen for securing social justice. But when ultimately it was produced and the author went to see it, he was horrified to discover that it had been changed into a gangster film. After that Sinclair refused to allow his name to be exploited by unimaginative Hollywood capitalists and declined all offers to write scenarios though, in collaboration with some radical friends, he once himself became a producer and made a film about revolutionary Mexico.

But his most interesting experience he had a few years ago, when he was approached by a very prominent studio to write a scenario to be called "Land Of Glory", which

would dramatize American history in the manner of "Cavalcade". Sinclair wrote it, according to his own ideas of American history which may be symbolized in the mark of interrogation which he put after the title so that it became—"Land of Glory?" The producer got the script entirely re-written, on conventional patriotic lines, removed the mark of interrogation from the title and sent it back to Sinclair for approval. Once again the same old process was repeated but the producer and the author having agreed to differ in their interpretation of American history, the picture was finally dropped.

After our talk Sinclair took us to the adjacent cottage where his Secretaries are kept busy replying correspondence and executing orders for books. Many of his works which commercial publishers refused to take up have been published by Upton Sinclair himself and sold to millions of American workers at practically cost price. The price of books is high in America and Sinclair, I believe, is the first to bring down the price of his books to 25 cents (About ten annas). This cottage is full of Sinclair's own books in all their editions and foreign translations.

I was interested to find here translations in Hindustani and several other provincial languages of India including Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi and Tamil. Sinclair was good enough to give us autographed copies of some of his works, accepted a copy of Pandit Jawaharlal's "Autobiography" from me and allowed Bagai to "shoot" him with his cine camera. Then we left this kindly old man who is perhaps the world's greatest individual campaigner for social justice, besides being one of the finest writers of this century and yet has the simple habits of a sage and the hearty friendliness of an American worker.

From Pasadena back to Beverley Hills (Of course there are no hills or even one hill here) where I broadcast a talk from KMPC—"the Station of the Stars" This is one of the eighteen different Radio stations in Los Angeles I called my talk "Hello, Hollywood", began by naming the stars who are popular in India—from Paul Muni to Shirley Temple—and then took advantage of this opportunity to give a bit of my mind to Hollywood producers about the anti-Indian pictures Addressing the movie capital I said, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Hollywood, for slandering a friendly people through your films" American radio stations are not State-owned but commercial concerns which subsist on advertising revenue Before and immediately after my talk the announcer read out advertisements of various products which made me also feel like a salesman

After the broadcast we leisurely drove along Hollywood Boulevard, watching the gay crowd thronging the cinemas and shops It does not look very much different from any big western city From here we made our way through a crush of cars and people to the Hollywood Bowl, the world-famous open air amphitheatre, where during the opera season 30 thousand people gather every night It is a grand spectacle, tiers upon tiers of men and women, seated on the slope of the natural semi-circle of the hill. The lights go out and the whole assembly is hushed into silence Far below the open stage is suddenly illuminated, there is a burst of orchestral music and the show is on It is "Madam Butterfly", one of the world's most famous operas, beautifully performed and lavishly produced

I don't much understand opera music but I can appreciate all the same the rise and fall of deep rich voices, the orchestral symphonies modulating in accordance with the

varying moods of the play and the music, disseminated to every corner of the "Bowl" by a cunning system of unseen microphones and loud-speakers, filling the air like an all-pervading perfume Not without reason are these shows called "Symphonies Under The Stars" Such open air performances of classical music are becoming popular, I learn, in every big town in America and if thirty thousand people can attend such a show even in Hollywood, surely it is wrong to say that the cultural taste of the American public has been reduced to a low vulgar level by cheap "musicals"

SIXTH DAY.

I lunch at Warner Bros. Studio and attend a Foreign Press Preview

Soon after breakfast we are heading for Burbank—Bagai and myself At the Warner Brothers Studios we are warmly received by Carl Schaeffer, the Foreign Press Manager, an interesting and bright young man, intellectually much above the average Hollywood publicist Guided by him, we investigate every department of the studio, look into some of the 24 sound-stages where work is progressing on some films On the "Dawn Patrol" set I meet Errol Flynn, tall and handsome, who bears an uncanny resemblance to our own Prithviraj

On another set we see Dick Powell working in some comedy sequence I am impressed by the technical resources of this studio—bigger perhaps than those of the entire Indian film industry—but I don't think the actual production methods are very much different from those of the better class of Indian studios Of course, I have no opportunity of watching the really great Directors and stars at work It is slack season in Hollywood and, owing

to an intense heat wave, most of the stars like Paul Muni and Luise Rainer, whom I would have liked to meet, are out of town

We look into the building which houses the Scenario Department and see dozens of scenarists, each with his (or her) separate room and a separate stenographer, at work. Some of them are successful journalists, playwrights and novelists, while others have been studio script-writers from the beginning. To these people goes the credit for Warner Brothers productions as a well-constructed scenario means more than half the success of the film

It takes us about three hours to complete a round of the studio premises—and yet we have had but a fleeting glimpse of the various departments. Schaeffer takes us to lunch at the Studio cafeteria where the important artistes working on the sets for the day are also present including Errol Flynn, Dick Powell, Anita Luise and Rosemary Lane

From Warner Brothers studios we drive straight to the University to attend a lecture by Mr Syud Hosain. After his return from his recent world tour he has been giving series of lectures on the world situation and today's lecture is about Palestine, in the course of which he learnedly exposes the role of British imperialism in the unfortunate hostility between the Arabs and the Jews

In the evening we attend, by invitation, the Foreign Press Preview of the Warner Brothers film "Four Daughters" at the Burbank studios. About a hundred correspondents, representing the press of almost every important country, are present. As most of the people have brought their wives or girl friends along, the small theatre is practically full and it is not the bleak and dreary affair that Press Shows in Bombay invariably are. It is a good

second class picture, notable for the first appearance of John Garfield, a very promising young actor, who has hitherto been appearing in progressive plays on the New York stage

Before going to sleep I read the entire shooting script of "Gungadin" which I have managed to secure by a journalistic "scoop" My suspicions were correct It will be, when produced, a most objectionable film and a libel on India I must warn my countrymen against it

SEVENTH DAY.

*I see Stars Picketing a Newspaper Office and say
Goodbye to Hollywood*

One meets one's countrymen in strange circumstances. I hardly got out of bed when there was a 'phone call from Mr Ataullah Durrani By the time I was dressed he had arrived in his car at the Y M C A and we talked over breakfast He turned out to be an Aligarh old boy and we discovered many common friends For years he has been doing business in U S A but since the world-wide depression, business in Indian goods is at a low ebb and he has recently turned his attention to films He is on good terms with Directors and writers in several studios, especially the Twentieth-Century Fox, and has good opportunities of studying the motion picture technique

With him I drove to his fine little bungalow in Hollywood where he lives with his Scotch wife in the neighbourhood of the homes of several well-known stars Discussing the films about India produced in Hollywood, I learnt from Mr Durrani that most of the scenario-writers, being men of education and democratic views, are sympathetic towards India and would like to present a favourable picture

of our country but the producers have their own ideas and between them and the British "technical advisers", they give an anti-Indian bias to every such film

In the afternoon I manage to visit the office of the "Hollywood Citizen-News", a leading local newspaper, where I see an entirely new Hollywood—the Trade Union—conscious Hollywood. The members of the editorial staff are on strike against working conditions imposed by the employers and are picketing the premises. What is amazing, however, is that the picket-line includes fashionably dressed stars and Directors who take turns to demonstrate their sympathy with the workers on strike.

This has resulted in the strike getting country-wide publicity and it is expected that the employers will soon have to climb down and accept the demands of the strikers. Such "radical" activities of Hollywood stars have given an excuse to the reactionary Senator Dies to make the most fantastic allegations that the "Reds" have got hold of the movie capital and are exploiting even Shirley Temple for communist propaganda (simply because the autographed photo of the child star appeared in a socialist daily of Paris ')

This is my last glimpse of Hollywood and in the evening as I take the train for New York and watch the million lights of this town of make-believe flash past the window, I try to sum up the different, and sometimes mutually contradictory, impressions which I formed during my seven days' stay.

I saw glimpses of the million dollar homes of stars and also the cheap and unhygienic lodgings where thousands of screen-struck youths live, hoping one day to crash the films and achieve stardom. That one out of a thousand

of them does manage to succeed, only makes their condition more pitiable. And all the time I asked myself, to what end? I met brilliant writers who work for practically illiterate producers, writers who sweat and labour for months to produce an artistic and socially useful scenario only to see it being "murdered" and reduced to the mediocre, melodramatic level of the average Hollywood production by incompetent Directors and producers whose only concern is to find the next million dollars.

In the studios I saw evidence of colossal waste—waste of money and energy caused by the insane whims of autocratic producers. The contrasts were clearly marked. A top notch star drawing a million dollars a year may spend months doing nothing, while an over-worked technical assistant may not get a few weeks vacation to revive his ragged nerves. Millions are paid to writers with names, who are kept on the pay-roll not to work but only so that no other studio may get hold of them, while brilliant but little known scenarists find it impossible even to get a hundred dollars for their efforts. Hollywood stands primarily for profits and more profits. All the symptoms of a profit-motive system are markedly evident—favouritism, cliques, sale of body and talent.

But that is basically true of all the industries under the present economic system. Hollywood and film-production are no exceptions. All that Hollywood differs in from other industrial centres is in the peculiar conditions of the film industry. Is it any surprise that an extra girl, getting a couple of dollars per working day, loses her head when suddenly sky-rocketed to fame and fortune by the triple combination of make-up, photography and publicity? It is disillusioning to find how few of the popular stars are really good looking, the others are just painted dolls.

who would be ashamed of appearing in public wearing their natural faces

Artificial appearance in turn leads to artificial speech, an acquired accent, theatrical gestures. The whole life becomes a pose. In such circumstances the wonder is that many stars do maintain a more or less human and natural outlook. And, it is heartening to note, that their number is increasing.

Originally Hollywood catered for the crudest public taste by producing the slap-stick comedies, the glycerine-tears-stained melodramas and jungle thrillers. Of late, however, new trends are visible in Hollywood. A better class of picture has made its appearance. They are not many, to every "Life of Emile Zola" there are a hundred "Lives of a Bengal Lancer." But they have brought with them a number of really good artistes—not just tailor-made dummies but human beings who think for themselves and take their art seriously. A group of young radical writers has also managed to gate-crash the studios.

It is not that the producers have suddenly seen the error of their ways or that they are now motivated by anything but the desire for profits. But as good business men, they are supplying the demand for better pictures, which is increasing with the growth of a better educated and more intelligent screen audience. The number of good pictures from Hollywood will be in proportion to this demand and it is the business of everyone who wants an improvement in Hollywood standards to make this demand vocal and powerful.

In political and social fields, Hollywood has hitherto mainly figured in reactionary roles. But from the ranks of the politically and socially conscious artistes, writers and

Directors, a new Hollywood is emerging. Among them, I discovered, there is a strong democratic, almost socialistic, public opinion. Hollywood has curiously enough become one of the strongest Trade Union centres and some of the most leading stars dare to champion the cause of workers demanding the right to organise.

An Anti-Fascist League has strong supporters in Hollywood and the movie colony has been very prominent in sending relief to the loyalist forces in Spain. Vittorio Mussolino, the son of the Italian Dictator, was socially boycotted when he came to Hollywood and he had to leave without completing the Fascist film which he had come to produce. I know of at least one leading star who, on completion of every picture, rewards his associates and co-workers not with a champagne party but with a year's subscription to a progressive magazine. The reactionaries all over America are saying that Hollywood has been captured by the Reds. That is far from true.

There is hardly any confirmed socialist among the prominent stars. But it is true that an increasing number of them are socially conscious individuals who refuse to live up to the Hollywood reputation of intellectual inertia. The future of Hollywood is in their hands. I leave Hollywood full of hope.

"Californian" Express
Somewhere between
Los Angeles and New York,
12th August, 1938

POUGHKEEPSIE

"With such a diversity of race, nationality, and political, religious and philosophical belief, yet with such a unanimity of determination and desire, who can doubt that the Second World Youth Congress will give the necessary lead to the youth of the world in their defence of peace!"

—Elizabeth Shields-Collins, International Secretary, World Youth Congress.

A few weeks ago if someone had mentioned Poughkeepsie I would have wanted to know whether it was a Czecho-slovakian pudding, a Scandinavian fish, or a pre-historic mammal. And yet forty million young people who were represented by their five hundred delegates at the World Youth Congress (which I attended in the dual position of a delegate and a journalist) are now going to hear of this little town in the suburbs of New York which played host to an unique and historic gathering.

The second session of the World Youth Congress is now over and one sits down to review its work in an atmosphere charged with the threat of war. It is easy to be cynical about the "Vassar Peace Pact", named after the college where the Congress was held, and signed by representatives of youth from fifty-four countries in a solemn ceremony on the concluding day. As the war drums echo through the corridors of Europe, they already seem to drown the passionate cry for peace that was raised by youth at Poughkeepsie. It is possible that before the delegates return to their countries, the world is thrown into the vortex of a homicidal war. It is possible that this attempt of youth to establish world peace was, as some suggest, too

early—or too late But the greatest achievement of the Youth Congress is that it was held at all

From the first day it was an unforgettable and inspiring experience for those who participated in these deliberations The session opened on August 15th with a grand youth rally on the New York Municipal Stadium at Randall's Island, when twenty thousand spectators thrilled to the sight of fifty-four delegations marching past with their flags held high But this was no military tattoo even though the searchlights played on the paraders Each national group was cheered as it passed the centre of the stadium But the greatest ovation was reserved for the Chinese and the Spanish and the huge assemblage stood on their feet to honour them Throats went hoarse, hats were in the air and the youths of New York proved they were one with their Chinese and Spanish comrades in the defence of democracy The Czecho-slovakians, in view of the threat of Hitler's aggression in their country, were also lustily cheered As our own group marched past with the only girl in our delegation, Renu Roy, carrying the national tricolour, we were greeted by heartening cheers and above the rumble of the applause came a shout from a corner of the stadium, "Good Old Gandhi"

Welcoming the delegates on behalf of the city, Mayor La Guardia, (who is credited with having given New York a progressive and clean administration turning out the racketeers), roared in a powerful speech "If the youth of the world want no war, there should be no war" These words, indeed, expressed the determination of all the delegates to strive for peace and the next nine days which we spent at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, (seventy miles from New York), were marked by a serious effort on the part of all the various delegates to arrive at a unanimous

agreement on every issue. The enormity of this task can only be appreciated when we realise the diverse composition of the Congress. Here are a few representative delegates who formed the colourful pattern of this vast assembly of youth.

Here is Yang Wen-ming, eighteen-year old Chinese heroine, with a price on her head. A year ago when the four hundred Chinese soldiers were holding out against heavy Japanese artillery fire in a warehouse in Shanghai, this girl repeatedly risked her life to carry messages to the soldiers who, through her help, were ultimately able to save their lives.

As a contrast, here is huge Kalibala from Uganda, East Africa, a staunch Christian and a graduate of the Columbia University, who electrified the entire gathering by his outspoken remark that the real savages were not his people, the tribal Negroes, but the White Militarists who gloried in mass murder.

Here are Teresa Beltran and Marguerita Robles, young peasant girls from Spain, representatives of the new youth of Spain, whose work alternates between fighting at the Front and carrying on a literacy campaign among the peasants and workers.

Among the large number of delegates who came to attend the Congress at great personal sacrifice is Isabel Ricker, a slip of a girl from western Canada, who hitch-hiked and walked hundreds of miles to reach New York.

Here is Doctor Bayen of Abyssinia, who declared that more than half of his country was still unconquered and received a great ovation when he said that the interests of the smaller nations demanded the defeat of the aggres-

sor fascist countries and the triumph of peace-loving democracies.

From South Africa came Doctor Max Joffe and his newly-wedded bride Saura Leslie, who believe participation in the Youth Congress was the best honeymoon they could plan. Whites themselves, they seem more concerned for the welfare of the coloured nationals of Africa and lodged a strong protest against the Union Government refusing a passport to a Negro delegate who was elected as a member of their party.

Palestine was represented by a Jew and an Arab but strangely enough Joshua Leibner and Rey Khouri both indicted Imperialism for the present troubles in Palestine instead of accusing each other.

The European diplomats may accept Hitler's invasion of Austria as *fait accompli* but the World Youth Congress refused to do so when it elected Doctor Hans Otto, leader of the underground Austrian youth movement, who came under a pseudonym, as a member of the committee.

It was a varied delegation from Great Britain—from the communist John Golan who extended his hand of friendship to the youth of the Fascist countries, the socialist Margaret Gale who condemned Imperialism and named her country as "the worst offender" to three conservatives who put a mild defence of the Chamberlain foreign policy.

The smallest country represented was Haiti (the original America that Columbus discovered) whose delegate, Laura Cadet, certainly put her little island on the map of the Youth world and revealed how the far-flung ramifications of fascism threatened the independent American countries including the three million residents of the republic of Haiti.

OUTSIDE INDIA

South America was well represented, most prominent being Mexico whose delegation chief, Cardenez, defended the expropriation of all foreign oil interests, and Puerto Rico, one of the few surviving colonies of USA whose delegates demanded freedom for their country and the end of the fascist rule by the present Governor.

And, lastly, there was our own Yusuf Meherally, who put forth such a strong case against British rule in India that, among the British delegates, the Liberals felt uncomfortable and the few conservatives went red in face with indignation. All of us, however, wherever we spoke made it clear that India was whole-heartedly for Peace and collective security but that the greatest danger to Peace was from Imperialism which must be ended, in India and elsewhere.

It was undoubtedly a most representative gathering. The political shades of opinion represented varied from Communism to Liberal-conservatism. Denominationally, the delegations included Christians (including not a few Catholics), Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and, perhaps, some atheists. No one could justifiably charge the Congress as being controlled by one single group, least of all by communists who were in a very small minority and generally co-operated with other progressive groups. The Red bogey with which some reactionary American newspapers sought to kill the Congress was a ridiculous figment which no one took seriously.

The Youth Congress had a "human interest" aspect, too. It achieved international "unity" in the form of two marriages, a dozen engagements and innumerable friendships!

While the Congress was composed of widely different elements, it was the common desire for Peace that brought

AT YOUTH CONGRESS



YANG WEN-MING
Heroine from China

TERESA & MARGUERITA

*They came from the
battle-fields of Spain*



FROM EAST AND WEST
Some delegates with Mrs Roosevelt

us all together Meeting as we did under the shadow of the war clouds in Europe, there was an almost desperate effort to minimize differences and rally round a common programme for peace Many of us knew war and its horrors at first hand The Chinese delegates jumped out of their beds on the first morning at the sound of the breakfast gong in the thought that it was an air-raid warning, the young delegates from Spain raised uneasy eyes every time they heard the drone of a passing aeroplane The Czechs were all the time expecting a national mobilization This was no frivolous college debating society It was a gathering of young men and women who realised the peril of the hour and met in a last minute effort to save the world The "Vassar Peace Pact" which was signed by the representatives of all delegations condemned all wars of aggression and pledged that the youth "shall do all in our power to guarantee that the youth of our country will never participate in a war of aggression" It further laid down that "there can be no permanent peace without justice between nations and within nations We advocate political and social justice within our countries and ask international machinery immediately to solve differences between nations in a peaceful way"

This pact is important as epitomizing the unity of youth all over the world on the three vital issues of Peace, Democracy and Social Justice But the work of the Congress did not end with the signing of this pact, and making fervent speeches supporting it After the preliminary sessions when delegates acquainted each other with conditions in their respective countries, the Congress broke up into four commissions to discuss in detail the problems arising out of these four important issues

(A) Political and Economic Organisation of Peace (B) Economic and Cultural status of Youth and its relation to

Peace (C) Religious and Philosophical Bases of Peace, and
(D) International Role of Youth

L It was in these commissions that the main constructive work of the Congress was done. Here we were to deal with concrete problems and offer solution and not to make airy speeches. The work in the Commissions established two facts, that there were many common problems shared by practically all countries—e.g. illiteracy, lack of social legislation, economic insecurity of youth, etc.—, and that the delegates had come thoroughly prepared to tackle these issues. It was amazing to find young delegates coming forward with statistics, observations and results of social experiments carried out by them in their respective countries. The Indian and Indonesian delegations made a vital contribution to the work of the Congress by submitting a carefully worked out plan for an international campaign against illiteracy which was adopted by the Commission on Economic and Cultural Status of Youth.

Concrete proposals came from other commissions, too. The need for ending the present race in armament and for a general reduction was emphasized, and it was urged that the arms industry be nationalised and trade in arms be internationally controlled. With regard to the war in China it was recommended to put an embargo on supply of all war materials, oil and loans to Japan, a Government as well as popular boycott of all Japanese goods, positive assistance to China in the shape of an internationally guaranteed loan to purchase arms for her defence and to repair the ravages of war. To stop the aggression in Spain it was suggested that the League of Nations should declare the aggressors and deal with them accordingly and restore the legitimate right of the Spanish government to buy arms for national defence. While condemning both Im-

perialism as well as racial persecution, "It was recognised that there exist deep international grievances arising out of unjust treaties and that these grievances are the cause of international insecurity, armaments and war. The delegates emphasized the inter-dependance of the problems of peaceful change, security and disarmament. All three should be tackled energetically and machinery should be provided whereby Article 19 of the League Covenant could be made effective."

Nor was the Congress indifferent to the economic issues. Considerable stress was laid on economic conditions as a cause of international unrest and there was a general condemnation of economic nationalism, trade barriers and currency restrictions which lowered the standard of living and created conflict. It was suggested that an international economic commission be set up to deal with economic problems (including access to raw materials) on an international scale. Colonialism was universally condemned, even the British delegates declaring that they were "opposed to the domination of one people by another for political or economic purposes."

The Commission on Economic and Cultural Status of Youth made specific proposals regarding free and compulsory education, vocational guidance, employment, wages, housing, health, etc. and devoted considerable attention to the problems of agricultural youth, colonial youth and young women.

Thus it will be seen that the Youth Congress was more than a mere jamboree. If there is one thing which it has established, it is that youth is conscious not only of its rights but also of its responsibilities. Is the Congress going to have an immediate effect on the world situation? I doubt

it Even before the youth of the world hear of the deliberations of the Congress we may be faced with a war. But one thing is certain The spirit of international solidarity and the desire for social justice and peace which was manifest at the Congress may be dormant for a while, its advocates may be rendered ineffective by a sudden conflagration, but it shall not die Indeed, it shall one day enter the fibre of human consciousness Then we shall see the birth of a new world

A small town called Sarajevo claimed a place in history in 1914 It started a great war Will Poughkeepsie be remembered as the town where youth laid the foundations of peace ?

*International House,
New York,
August, 1938*

YOGA, INC.

"If you want to delve into after-life, the cosmic creation, the divine and unseen forces, transmutation, divine telepathy, divine healing, occult receptivity and allied subjects, Yoga will show you how?Telephone C. A. 9531."

—Advertisement of a Yoga Institute in
Los Angeles.

The precocious little boy in the next seat prodded me not too gently to make sure I was not a brown-coloured saw-dust dummy but a real human being.

"Say", he began in his national nasal slant with which I was beginning to get familiar, "Where do you come from?"

"India", I briefly replied.

"Say, are you a Maharooja?"

"No".

"Are you a fakir?"

"No."

"Are you a magic man?"

"No."

"Then you must be a Swami".

He said it with an air of final triumph and was quite disappointed when I said I was just a newspaper man.

That boy, on the Seattle-Los Angeles train, possessed amazing wealth of misinformation about India. He thought we all rode elephants and kept snakes as pets, that all Indians above the age of twelve had seven wives

each and legion of children He was representative of the great American public that is fed on authors like Miss Mayo and films like "India Speaks", and readily accepts all the lurid lies, perversions and half-truths about India and the Orient That little boy who thought I was a fakir and had seven wives has been educated into such beliefs by the subtle propaganda of British Imperialism

But why should I, clad in passable western clothes, be mistaken for a Swami? Who is a Swami anyway?

I had vaguely heard in India that some spiritualist missions were operating in America and as soon as I reached Los Angeles I made enquiries about them In that town of strange churches and spiritual fads, I found, there are quite half a dozen Indian Swamis busy saving the souls of American men and women On the second day of my stay I was taken to one of their "temples"

From outside it looked like a mosque The arched doorway and windows were Saracenic, the lattice work was plagiarized from the Taj Mahal A big Chinese chandelier threw the entrance hall into "dramatic" light and shade so conducive to a spiritualist gathering On the walls were pictures of rishis and holy men of the Himalayas A truly Oriental atmosphere

A car stopped in front of the porch and two women got out The elder one, a flashily dressed middle-aged matron, looked around, drank in the sanctified air, and burst out, "How Heavenly!"

The younger woman, in a picturesque black gown, using the eloquent vocabulary of the sophisticated American school-girl, simply said, "How cute!"

More and more devotees were now arriving and we all filed into the meeting hall which was already more

YOGA, INC.

than half full. I looked around to see what sort of company I was in.

About a hundred people were present though the number considerably increased by the time the meeting started. Women predominated—prosperous, middle-aged women who live in bungalow courts in the palmy suburbs of Los Angeles and drive to the “temple” in their own cars. I was astonished to see a workman in blue over-alls sitting next to me. Here, I told myself, must be a true seeker of spiritual guidance.

“What brings you here, my friend?”, I asked him.

“That Swami guy sure can speak nicely. Then there is the music and the movies.” He added, “And it’s all free.”

It did prove to be a varied and diverting programme, doses of spiritual and “uplifting” talk being duly alternated by travel films, violin recitals and songs. The proceedings began with the appearance of the Swami himself. If I was expecting him to be an ascetic in a loin cloth I was disappointed. He proved to be a smart young man, clean shaven, with a smile that many film stars might well envy. In a flowing robe of white and a rather amateurishly tied turban, he was indeed more like Ramon Novarro in “Son of India” than a hermit from a Himalayan *ashram*. The Hollywood atmosphere is contagious.

The Swami’s introductory remarks were free from an excess of the mystic touch and were more akin to a Rotary lunch speech. Good-will, harmony among peoples and all that. The principal speaker of the evening was announced to be an American lady who had just returned from a “wonderful” tour of India. Following a harp solo, the lady appeared on the stage to recount her experiences of India, “that glorious land of mysticism and romance” ! She spoke

of the ethereal beauty of sunset over Kinchinjunga, the "glamorous architecture of that immortal memorial to Love—Taj Mahal", the serene wisdom of the great saints and rishis whom she had seen meditating in the caves of Amarnath and the "simple but lofty life of the Indian peasants" Simple and lofty, indeed ! I thought of the poverty-stricken villages, the famines and the epidemics, the draughts and the floods, the usurers and the landlords, the squalor of the slums I thought of millions of my countrymen who got only one meal per day Yet, what did it matter if this noble lady, stepping from her first class cabin on a luxury liner, had certified that their lives were "Simple but lofty" ? And I wondered if it was better to be slandered by Katherine Mayo or be so gushingly misrepresented by this obviously sincere lady who went to India with such fixed notions that she saw nothing but the beauty of the landscape and the spiritual greatness of the sages ?

Meanwhile various little tracts and brochures were distributed to us and I opened one of these to find something more about the activities carried on in the temple Among the lecture subjects announced for future dates were such elusive phrases as "Karma, Kismet and Sonship", "Peace, Poise and Transmutation" and "Wisdom of the Ancient-MU" Elusive but impressive ! Everyone was invited to "Attend these inspirational services and be healed" Nor was healing restricted to spiritual maladies Besides helping one to "contact God", Yoga healing is also recommended for "headache, constipation, insomnia, obesity, underweight or restlessness" For further "healing" one is informed "Meditation is held atop the Mt Washington Estates,———Avenue An hour of perfect peace and communion with God Take Northbound W car and get off at W Ave 41 where our car will meet you"

YOGA, INC.

A far, far cry from the bare-footed wandering sages of India who dare the rigours of snow-clad mountains! It is Yoga, 1938, American version. It is Yoga, Incorporated. Modern, efficient, well-organized, like all forms of American Business.

The proceedings that evening came to a close with prayers and circulation of the basket "for collections" and I did not blame my over-allied friend for leaving the hall just in time to miss these two items of the programme. The business of the day over, the "Swami", now clad in a gleaming white suit obviously made by some Fifth Avenue tailor, walked away with his American wife!

"What do you think of all this?", asked my friend who had taken me to the temple. I was too dazed to reply.

"You must at least admit", he continued, "that this Swami business is a good reply to the colossal conceit of the White people sending missionaries to India to save our souls."

I agreed. Indeed later on I was to find that some of the Swamis in America have been doing genuinely good work in creating an atmosphere of good will between Indians and Americans. They have at least helped to remove the impression that Indians are ignorant heathens whose souls must be saved by missionaries. But it is doubtful how far Yoga and the fast-paced material life of America can be harmonized.

At least one man I met seemed to think that Yoga could be made into as great a business proposition as Ford's automobiles or Rockefeller's oil. He is a hotel-owner-cum-physical-culturist-cum-student of Yoga who lives on an estate in the suburbs of New York. A pseudo-Oriental at-

mosphere pervades his hotel Statues of Buddha and Persian carpets! Himself a typical cigar-chewing American businessman, he is a great believer in the future of Yoga in America

"Yep", he said, as he propounded to me his scheme of spreading Yoga in the land of the dollar, "there is great scope for Yoga in this country But one must organize it properly. Send me a Swami with proper credentials from India, a Swami with a big name, and see what I can do with him I see a huge net-work of Yoga centres for spiritual as well as physical healing, Yoga magazines, Yoga restaurants for vegetarian food, Yoga camps for the holidays Gee, there are millions in it, if only it is properly organised "

Even though he dilated at length on the commercial possibilities of exploiting Yoga, I don't believe his interest in Yoga is purely mercenary I learnt that he has done a good deal to popularize the Yoga system of physical culture in America He seems to know a lot about it, too But, as a businessman, he cannot help looking at everything from the commercial angle—even if it be spiritualism, religion or even God To him Yoga is spelt Yoga, Inc

Fairly wide-spread interest in Yoga and Eastern religions is but a manifestation of the spiritual unrest in America Material progress, without any moral or ethical values, has proved insufficient You cannot worship Mammon for ever Even though the Get-rich-quick financier keeps himself busy by chasing dollars on the Stock Exchange, his wife, forced to lead a life of indolence at home without the benefits of education or culture, which may have provided her with useful pastimes, naturally feels dissatisfied with life She is the prey of all faddists, quacks and dope-merchants She finances all strange cults and

YOGA, INC.

crazy movements. Sometimes she turns to the first Oriental religion she hears of. For, here is not only spiritual salvation but also the glamour and romance which she has been brought up to associate with the East. Her interest in Yoga or Hinduism or Islam is not matter for enthusiasm amongst the followers of the faith of her choice. It is, often, a psychological—or even physiological—phenomenon.

At the World Youth Congress we had a strange experience of this phenomenon. Some of the delegates from India were standing in one corner when they were approached by a group of American women. They looked prosperous upper middle class women and evinced great interest in India. "Tell us something about Mahatma Gandhi." We readily obliged, giving a detailed account of the Indian nationalist movement and the role that Gandhiji has played in it. As they heard us, eyes wide open with the wonder of it all, I suspected that they were not quite understanding the political jargon we were talking. But being polite they did not interrupt our discourse.

A few days later one of us received a letter from one of the ladies, thanking us for the insight we had given them into "the great mystery of India." The letter concluded: "I was so interested in all you told us about India that straight away I went to the library and took out a most interesting book on India to study. It is called 'Strange Sex Rites Of The Orient'".

Perhaps a Freudian would explain this phenomenon better.

*International House,
New York,
August, 1938.*

THE DARKER BROTHER

"I, too, sing America
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen,
When company comes;
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong
Tomorrow
I'll sit at the table
When company comes,
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen"
Then.
Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—
I, too, am America."

—LONGSTON HUGHES,
a Negro poet.

I first became conscious of the Negro problem in America when travelling from Los Angeles to New York. On the first day in the train I went to the "Diner" for lunch and found the whole place crowded. There was only one seat vacant on a table occupied by a buxom woman and her two children. The little boy, finding me looking about for a seat, pleasantly beckoned me to come and take my seat on their table. But the mother stopped him with an audible whisper, "No, not him. He is a nigger."

The boy looked at me suspiciously, the occupants of other tables stopped eating to find what was the matter,

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a suppressed bitterness was visible on the countenance of the Negro waiters and the manager of the Dining Car, obviously perturbed, hastened to whisper to the woman that I was not a Negro at all but a "Hindu". This seemed to have a soothing effect on the woman and she said, "Oh, that is different. You can sit here, young man". I was, however, not going to take this lying down. I replied, "But it is not different. Now I refuse to sit on the same table as you," and came away.

The incident created quite a sensation in the train. The Dining Car manager came running to me and said that even if I was a Negro I had perfect legal right to sit on the same table whether the woman liked it or not. He was obviously afraid that I would report him to the higher authorities. I reassured him that I had no complaint against him but refused to go back to the Dining Car. Meanwhile some of the other passengers returned to their seats and started talking to me, holding my action to be the only course for a self-respecting man.

The race-conscious woman, I learnt, came from a southern state, where prejudice against the negroes still takes acute forms of racial segregation. The talk took a controversial aspect when the southern woman, too, returned to her seat and took a hand in the argument. Soon the Negro issue had been relegated to the background and the age-old South versus North battle was on. The Northern group accused the South. of upholding the barbarian practice of lynching, of being antediluvian in their racial and political ideologies and of being generally backward and reactionary.

The woman, a spirited creature, retorted by saying that the sympathy of the North for the Negroes was hypocri-

tical, that selfish and economic motives rather than humanitarian considerations prompted the Emancipation Proclamation and that if the South was poor and backward it was due to the parasitical super-capitalists of the North. As the controversy raged round me, I was forcefully reminded of the truth implicit in the film "They Won't Forget"

Later on during my stay in the United State I had occasion to discuss the Negro question with many people, Negroes as well as Whites, from the South as well as the North. And I was astounded to find that there was some truth in what the southern woman had said. We whose knowledge of American history is obviously sketchy and incomplete, have always believed in the unselfish benevolence of Abraham Lincoln's declaration emancipating the Negro slaves. We have also believed that in the Civil War the Northern states were motivated only by their desire to free the slaves in the south.

As Doctor Du Bois writes in his monumental book, "The Negro", the civil war "was not against slavery. It was fought to protect free White labourers against the competition of slaves, and it was thought possible to do so by segregating slavery." Indeed it was after two years of the war that the "Emancipation Proclamation was forced, not simply by the necessity of paralyzing industry in the South but also by the necessity of employing Negro soldiers" who, in fact, proved to be the deciding factor in the final victory of the North.

Even during the war when fugitive slaves began to seek the protection of the Northern armies only one of the Generals freed them. Others either confiscated them or caught them and returned them to the Southern armies.

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It has also to be remembered, as a Boston boy whose grandfather was a slaver frankly told me, that the slave trade had always been carried on by people of the Northern maritime states who, by the most barbarous methods, caught the slaves on the African coast and brought them in shiploads to be sold for plantation work in the southern states.

The hostility to salvery originated in the North only with the establishment of textile factories in the Northern states and the consequent economic rivalry with the cotton-growing South, which had a monopoly of slave labour. One has to know this historical background to understand why prejudices against the Negroes persist not only in the South where millions of them still live and work in a condition bordering on serfdom, but also in the North where the Negroes, though generally educated and fairly well-to-do, are still denied full social equality.

The tradition of racial discrimination dies hard. Except among communists and a small but increasing number of radical youths, the sense of White superiority still lurks even in the most educated and advanced section of the American public. In the South where the feudal economic system of the plantations has always depended on slavery, serfdom and peonage, the cleavage between the Whites and the Blacks is more marked.

The feudal landlords and plantation owners, perhaps the most reactionary element in the United States, who have reduced even the White workers to a hopelessly low standard of living, are afraid of the coloured and the white masses joining hands and, therefore, assiduously encourage and inflame race enmity which manifests itself in frequent lynchings of Negroes. While this racial

madness stalks the land, economic issues are conveniently kept in the background and exploitation of farm labourers and plantation workers goes on unchecked. As many years ago Booker T. Washington, a Negro leader, observed, "The White cannot keep the Negro in the ditch without staying in the ditch with him"

The majority of Negroes live in the South and not a few capitalists of the North are interested in their continuing to live in the present conditions, legally free but economically little better than they were in the days of slavery. Large amounts of capital from the North are invested in the south and big dividends depend on cheap Negro labour. Recently, with the upsurge of the awakened labour movements in the Northern states, capitalists are beginning to see the advantages of establishing their mills and factories in the south where Trade Unionism has not been allowed to make any headway and corrupt local administrations can be easily bribed to put down with a heavy hand the activities of labour organizers.

Even apart from these capitalists, most of the middle class people in the North seem to be reluctant to treat the Negroes on terms of equality. The tradition of racial discrimination dies hard. I found the sense of White superiority lurking even in the most educated and advanced section of the American people with the only exception of communists (whose rigid ideology allows of no racial bias) and a small though happily increasing number of radical youths, who are trying to get rid of the racial complex that they have inherited from their families and their class.

It is by no means an easy process and a student from the Middle West who is otherwise a pronounced radical

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confessed to me that despite his convictions he instinctively finds it difficult to treat the Negro on an absolute basis of equality. This unconscious sense of racial superiority, a legacy from the past, often takes the form of benevolent separatism and I heard a high U S Government official declare proudly that in a particular city the Works Project Administration had built a swimming pool for the Negroes. For the Negroes! Not for all citizens including the Negroes!

It is heartening to see, however, that the Negroes themselves are now determined to assert their full political and civic rights. Many cases of racial discrimination are challenged in the courts and favourable decrees obtained. There are associations in many cities which seek to safeguard the civil liberties of Negroes and they have been successful in most of the legal cases they have fought. Only recently on a representation made by one such Association, a New York court established the right of Negro children sharing a public swimming pool in their neighbourhood and warned the management of the pool against allowing any kind of discrimination. President Roosevelt and Mrs Roosevelt are often known to have raised their voice in protest against racial discrimination.

The Negroes who, inspite of centuries of slavery and persecution, have still maintained their upright character and what is even more remarkable, their sense of humour very seldom suffer from morbid inferiority complex. While talking to them about their condition I have very rarely found them petty or over-sensitive. Even while describing their plight they are cheerful.

But within this cheerful exterior it is no wonder that some of them harbour a soul-searing bitterness against

their exploiters and persecutors This natural feeling has been to some extent further inflamed by a few well-to-do Negroes who preach racial separatism for their own selfish ends Like some of the Indian capitalists who saw in nationalism a means of their economic gains, this coloured bourgeois seeks to gain the Negro market by raising such slogans as "Boycott Non-Negro shops" There are also those honest patriots whose legitimate resentment against the persecution of their race leads them to the illogical conclusion that the entire White race must be punished for this

I had an occasion to come into contact with this section of the American Negroes when, along with other Indian and African delegates to the World Youth Congress, I attended a reception given to us by the Ethiopian World Federation and some other Negro organizations in Harlem It was a huge gathering and we were touched by the hospitality and friendliness of these people After supper we drank a toast to the Emperor of Ethiopia who is now living in exile, a victim of Italian fascism We applauded the speech of Doctor Bayen, President of the Ethiopian World Federation, who declared that the fight for freedom was still going on in his country

The speaker who followed poured fire and thunder into his words He invited us to join a coloured world front against all White people and said in so many words that when we gained ascendancy we should do the white races exactly what they had done to us This remark was greeted with tremendous applause and I suddenly saw the danger of patriotism run amuck It was my turn to speak next I sensed the delicate position in which I was placed Should I risk courting the displeasure by disagreeing with the previous speaker or should I betray

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my convictions by pandering to a coloured edition of chauvinism?

I began on safe ground by thanking our hosts, expressing the sympathy of India for Ethiopia and assuring the American Negroes that we were with them in their struggle for the attainment of complete political, social and economic equality in their country. Then I dared to ask them if they had ever cared to find out the causes which were responsible for the present condition of Negroes in America, for the subjection of India, for the invasion of Ethiopia, for the suppression of coloured races in Africa, for the rape of Manchuria and Austria and for the present Japanese invasion of China.

I suggested that it was not a question of colour at all. Otherwise why should White complexioned Nazis be persecuting White complexioned Jews? Why should the "Yellow" Japanese be overrunning the country of the "Yellow" Chinese? Briefly I stated the historical interrelation between imperialism, militarism, capitalism and fascism. Are we going to inflict one more evil in the world by letting loose a coloured imperialism? I asked and was relieved to find that at least a few voices replied "NO"

We are going to fight injustice, I said, whatever form it takes. All those who are victims of injustice, be they black, white or yellow are our friends. All those who are instruments of injustice, irrespective of their complexion, are our enemies. There was applause though not so vociferous as my predecessor had received. And I sat down assured that I had not made myself too unpopular in Harlem. I would have hated myself if I had incurred the displeasure of this friendly crowd.

My stay in the United States has been memorable, particularly for the kindness and fraternal feelings with which I was received by numerous Negro men and women—from train attendants to political leaders. In Poughkeepsie during the Youth Congress we, the Indian delegates, had innumerable occasions to exchange views with the Negro delegates and always found them friendly, reasonable and enthusiastic for the cause of India's freedom. In many a Negro home we were invited and entertained with such warmhearted cordiality that we wondered if we Indians were even half as hospitable. Above all I have cause to be grateful to my Negro friends for they taught me many things.

They taught me self-respect. Again and again I would meet some boy or girl of pure White complexion who would surprise me with the statement that he or she was a Negro. It seems that everyone in America with even a drop of negroid blood is not only not ashamed of being known as a Negro but is definitely proud of it. And yet in our country there are thousands who would do anything to be called Europeans, Eurasians or at least Anglo-Indians!

They taught me the significance of music as the means of a people's self-expression. I can never forget the "Spirituals", sung by the Negro delegates, at the World Youth Congress. In these melodies of liquid fire is the whole story of the American negroes—the echoes of the far off jungle, their original home in Africa, the laments of decades of slavery when they worked in cotton field or plantation or rowed the boats on the Mississippi, the religious ardour of the hymns they sang in churches to merge their miserable existence into the joy of spiritual consolation, the growing rumblings of protest, and through

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it all running like a vein, that uncanny element of optimism and faith which has enabled them to survive through centuries of the worst forms of persecution ever known in human history

Music, indeed, has been undeniably the greatest contribution made by the Negroes to the American culture. Music and the dance. From the jungle they had brought with them a sense of rhythm and the elemental joy of living which they wove into the pattern of jazz, the melody of the twentieth century which, divorced from the melancholy formalism of classical music, proves that the springs of life are the same in man be he in Coney Island or Congo!

No America would not be the same without the Negroes. And the American Negroes are as much a part of the New World as the Irish or the Spaniards or any of the other immigrants. You have only to see a young Negro, driving with his girl friend in high-powered automobile or, in immaculate white evening clothes, tap dancing in a Broadway cabaret, to realize that he will not be at home in the jungle. He may have been stolen from his land and brought here by force but by suffering and devotion he has established his claim to call this his home. He, too, is America.

*International House,
New York,
August, 1938*

METROPOLIS

"This city of Manhattan gave him no clue; it was walled against him, like a river of adamant it flowed past him in the streets. Never an eye was turned upon him; no voice spoke to him. The houses were interminable ramparts loop-holed for defence; the people were bright spectres passing in sinister and selfish array."

—O'Henry in "The making of a New Yorker."

A young American artist who is crossing the Atlantic on the "Normandie" with me and is eagerly looking forward to seeing Paris and its wealth of mediaeval art insists that New York is a prosaic, uninteresting city with no cultural traditions to look back upon. It is, in his opinion, a jungle of steel and concrete and the inhabitants are little better than barbarians.

The artist comes from Boston, one of the few American cities with a past, and in his violent anti-New York complex I suspect a trace of the aristocratic New Englanders's contempt for an industrial metropolis. I was in Boston only for a few hours and was taken round by a guide who was very proud of the historic associations of the town and showed us various memorials and monuments to the heroes of the War of Independence and the Civil War. Then he took us to the part of the city where, he said, "the Blue Bloods" live. Rows of double-storied villas with gardens, lace curtains in the windows, and on the whole a sleepy dreamy atmosphere which is in marked contrast to the hustle and clatter of New York. It is here that old families live in houses too big for their slender resources, a bankrupt aristocracy, frightened by the increasingly fast tempo of American life but hugging to

their bosoms the proud memories of their ancestors and the "Mayflower" As I looked at these quiet and dignified mansions I could understand the pathetic, because futile, resistance of these people against the new power of industry and Big Business The chimney of a factory loomed in the background From the park nearby came the voice of a communist addressing a meeting of workers The quiet feudal isolation of Boston seemed doomed

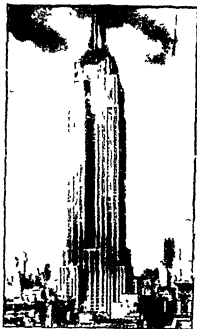
But the artist is far from being an aristocrat himself, and one must recognise in his antipathy to New York something more than snobbery Many other American youths whom I met did not feel too proud of their biggest city There is something wrong with New York but it is absurd to explain it in terms of the lack of royal tombs and ruined palaces which are the only signs of culture in many cities of Europe and Asia

I myself was rather disillusioned by the first look of New York It was my own fault, too Instead of entering the harbour from the sea when the statue of Liberty and the imposing skyline of the city would have greeted me, I entered surreptitiously by the back-door Four days of travel by rail, even in the comfortable American trains, is liable to sharpen one's cynical faculty And thus on the fifth day of leaving Los Angeles when I opened my sleepy eyes in the morning and saw a vista of ugly buildings, dingy warehouses and endless smoky tunnels through which the train thundered, is it any wonder that I did not utter a joyful cry "Eureka ! New York ?"

Nor did I find much to enthuse over in the monotonously similar buildings They were tall, no doubt, and I was naturally impressed when I looked up to the top of the Empire State Building from the street though it almost

cost me my life when a car whizzed past in the alarming medley of traffic I went up to the top of the building and was scandalized to find that it cost a dollar (Later I marvelled at the ingenuity of American capitalists who first utilized their land space to the maximum by building sky—scrapers and, then, collected a tidy sum every day by luring visitors to go up and look at New York) Everything—hotels, meals, taxi cabs—was expensive There was too much noise, too much hurry, everyone was pre-occupied I decided I did not like New York—on the second day of my stay in the city

And yet soon I was to find that our prejudice against foreign cities is only because we are not used to them Within a week I was not only attuned to the tempo of New York life but was enjoying it It was exhilarating to travel by fast trains, fast buses, fast cars There was power and vigour in the air One felt like “going places and doing things” People were friendly, one could talk to anyone without a formal introduction There was much to see in the city even though the traditional haunts of the tourist—ruined royal palaces, tombs of tyrants and ivy-covered castles—were missing Nothing was very old, but almost everything had social rather than ornamental value We may be proud of our Taj Mahal and Qutab Minar, the Italians may boast of the Leaning Tower, the Parisians may have their Eiffel Tower but the Empire State Building and the Rockefeller Centre are not mere piles of ornamental architecture They are centres of finance and industry, journalism and radio and a hundred other things which constitute the complex structure of modern life In the “Museum of Science and Industry” I found much more to interest me than in the museum of antiquities which is supposed to be the hall-mark of civic culture in Europe There you



NEW YORK

*Empire State Building,
tallest in the world*



LIBERTY

*It cost a lot to repair the
famous statue*



New York At Night

METROPOLIS

have the relics of the past, here I had the vision of the future. The grounds of the World's Fair which is fast taking shape opened vistas of a brand new and better world. As for Art and Beauty, it is entirely a matter of taste whether you like the paintings of kings and queens and popes and flower pots that crowd the galleries of Paris or the symbolic representation of man's conquest over nature that is the theme of the murals in the Rockefeller Centre. Those who hold there is no beauty in New York should take a walk along the Riverside Drive on an evening, watch the tops of the sky-scrapers floating among the clouds or stand on Manhattan Bridge at night and look at the myriad twinkling eyes of New York. I definitely liked the city—at the end of my first week in New York.

It was, however, during the last few days of my stay that I had a more balanced view of New York, and, sobered after my first moments of prejudice and the subsequent flush of enthusiasm, tried to see things in their proper perspective. It was then that I found what a tremendous hold Big Business has on this city. As I walked along the streets, looking at the attractive display of goods in shop-windows, I noticed hundreds of small shops either closed or with placards announcing their impending closure "owing to unfavourable business conditions". The American efficiency which, when yoked to a socialist economy, saved the Five Year Plan in Russia, has only swelled the ranks of the unemployed in the USA. The small man—the small shopkeeper, the small manufacturer, the small farmer—is being squeezed out of business by the super-capitalists. Depression or no depression, the bigger department stores continue to flourish and with their huge resources they are able to oust the small men from the field. It is called freedom and democracy "Competition",

it is asserted, "gives impetus to business" The net result seems to be that the rich continue to grow richer and the poor poorer Roosevelt has no doubt tried to help the small man in trade and industry but I learnt his efforts are being severely opposed by all the big financiers and captains of industry and he has not been able to achieve much

It is the same in every field Newspapers, radio stations, film studios, theatres and cabarets are all owned by various combinations of a few big financiers, so that you have the curious but significant phenomenon of the President of a democracy who was elected by a huge majority unable to find any big newspaper or radio station to support him It is inevitable that such a position should be duly reflected in politics and everyone knows to what an extent politicians have to depend on Big Business Corruption is inevitably followed by Crime and the trial of Jimmy Hines, head of the Democratic Party in New York, is revealing how Big Business, Politics and Crime are often linked together in an unholy alliance Until a few years ago gangsters held sway over New York City and it is known that they were tolerated and sometimes even abetted and aided by Big Business It is not always by scrupulous means that freedom to amass wealth is enjoyed

In the eastern districts of New York I saw how the poor live in the richest city in the world I don't say what I saw in any way approximated to the slum conditions in India but it was certainly not a pleasant sight to see, within a stone's throw from the glittering facades of Broadway and Forty-second Street, working class families huddled together in dark unhygienic dwellings President Roosevelt recently said that one third of the nation suffered from unsatisfactory housing conditions According to others the figure should be still higher

METROPOLIS

The most amazing thing was to see beggars and cripples on the sidewalks of New York, standing at street corners in shabby clothes like scare-crows—to scare away the illusion of American prosperity! Acute labour unrest was also manifest. Employees in dozens of factories and stores were on strike against unsatisfactory working conditions. Trade Unionism is increasingly becoming strong in New York. But the capitalists with their characteristic shrewdness have found means of escaping from it and many of them are shifting their factories to smaller towns where labour is not so well organized and they can dictate their own terms to the workers.

I have a fixed notion that the best way of studying a people is to watch them in their moments of leisure. Culture, after all, is the use you make of your spare time. A typical New Yorker, however, has very little spare time. To get along in the world, he must keep himself busy all the while. It takes him less than ten minutes to snatch a lunch at a cafeteria or self-service restaurant and then he is rushing back to work again. Even at the expensive night clubs where the big financiers, successful business men and other moneyed people gather to relax in the evening you find them dashing away after every dance to make an urgent telephone call—maybe to London or Paris or Berlin. Such are the inevitable results of a system based on endless competition when a moment of leisure may cost you millions in a Stock Exchange crash. It is not the men on the top alone who live this high-pressure life of hurry and bustle. Speed and mechanical efficiency are essential for the entire people engaged in competitive production and if you lag behind you find yourself on the street among the legion of the unemployed. And thus this culture of industrial New York has reached a stage when even relaxation is sought in speed. A young American

once told me "The automobiles are more than mere means of transport for us They are means of self-expression. Why, if a fellow is jilted by his girl he naturally wants to take his car out on the highway and step on the gas"

As the "Normandie" slowly sailed away and I looked at the skyscrapers shrouded in a mist of smoke from countless factory chimneys, I thought of the vast opportunities that such a highly industrialised modern city with such an advanced productive system should offer to its people, of the tremendous resources of New York which, alas, are being wasted or used only for a few people In my mind I weighed the good and the evil that I had seen in this complex city and imagined a time when in New York one would sense the same vigour and vitality, work and live in the same marvellous skyscrapers, ride in the same fast buses and cars and trains but when there would be no slums, no beggars on Broadway and when people would have security and leisure enough to enjoy their food and their amusements It was not with a light heart that I left this great city which has the power of becoming the metropolis of a new and better world instead of being remembered as another symbol of man's tyranny over man, like Pompeii or Rome

SS "Normandie,"
Some where in the Atlantic
1st September, 1938

Book Three

WAR-CLOUDS OVER EUROPE

ZERO HOUR

"All that I say and do is history"—

—Adolf Hitler.

Last night, in the capitals of Europe and even across the Atlantic, millions awaited the Zero hour with breathless suspense. Peace or War?

In Paris from early evening thousands thronged the streets waiting for the special editions of newspapers to come out with Hitler's Nuremberg speech on the Czechoslovakian situation. Those who understood German sat in their homes by short-wave radio sets to hear the fateful pronouncement in the Fuehrer's own voice.

The speech was scheduled for 7 p.m. I joined the crowd in a restaurant in Montparnasse and after an early supper everyone kept a sharp eye for the news-boys to make their appearance. There was intense excitement in the air. Nerves were strained and soon at every street corner there started violent discussions between partisans of various political groups. . . between supporters of Front Populaire and the French semi-Fascists, between socialists and communists, between advocates of Franco-Soviet pact and the rabid nationalists. Voices grew louder, and more people felt it necessary to participate in the discussions. White collar clerks, workers from factories, gendarmes, students, artists, even the otherwise cynical demi-mondes, everyone was keenly, anxiously, debating the issue which they knew to be of vital importance to their own personal lives. Peace or War?

This was the climax of the general state of tension that had been prevailing in the world during the last few weeks. I left New York on 31st August on the "Normandie" which sailed with an unusually small number of pas-

sengers on board Hundreds, I learnt, had cancelled their reservations owing to their fear of the unsettled state of Europe, while on the return journey to the United States the boat was fully booked for people leaving Europe in a hurry During the voyage the threat of war was the only topic of conversation and the brief news bulletins were scanned apprehensively every morning One day the rumour gained currency that a war had been actually declared but the steamer authorities were holding back the news for fear of creating a panic Next day we looked with uneasy eyes as a German steamer passed us in the distance On board we had Ernest Hemingway, the American author, who is fighting with the International Brigade in Spain and who was almost arrested when he boarded the steamer, and Julien, "the Black Eagle", a Negro aviator and adventurer who fought for the Abyssinians against Italy and now talked of enlisting in the French Air Force to fight Hitler

Nor was the state of tension eased when we arrived in Paris There was incessant talk of mobilization, trainloads of soldiers were leaving for the Frontier every day, big posters advertising the National Defence Loan were put up in the streets while every home displayed printed instructions to follow in case of a sudden air-raid At the travel agencies, tourists added the proviso, "If the frontiers are not closed by then" when discussing plans for a tour of Central Europe And an ominous silence fell on a group of foreigners when the guide, taking us round the city, pointed to a church on which had landed some of the shells from the German "Big Bertha" during the last war Everyone thought with a shudder It might happen again

And now the man who was solely responsible for creating this uneasiness and tension was going to speak

ZERO HOUR

For what seemed an interminable period we waited for the newspapers until at about 10 p.m. the appearance of the first news-boy caused a general scramble. I am afraid the poor news-boys had a rough time last night.

The speech for which we had so anxiously waited and hastened to read through in that cafe on Montparnasse, even as it was being anxiously scanned in the Chancelleries of Europe, came to many as a bit of an anti-climax though it certainly relieved the high pitch of tension and sent peacefully to sleep many uneasy heads which had dreaded an immediate declaration of war. Highly-strung women with husbands or sons in the Army burst into tears of joy. The only thing that mattered last night was that we had still some more days of peace and, momentarily relieved of our anxiety, there was a general exodus from the streets. Soon the music halls and cabarets were crowded and cafes rang with laughter as the strains of "Marseilles" broke through a medley of gay music.

Read in the disillusioning light of day, Hitler's speech gives little cause for enthusiasm. The dogs of war are not leashed—yet. The Zero Hour has only been postponed.

Last night's brief moment of relief is already wearing off, as the ominous implications of Hitler's words become more apparent. As I come back from lunch the afternoon papers announce another serious "incident". Once again there are uneasy, anxious faces on the gay boulevards of Paris.

*Hotel Champs Elysees,
Paris,
13th September, 1938.*

PARADOX OF PARIS

*" Ah, qu'il est beau mon village,
Mon Paris, Notre Paris "*

(Oh, How beautiful is my village, my Paris, Our Paris)
—A popular song of Paris.

Wednesday morning in New York, Sunday evening in Paris In four days the *Normandie* not only crosses the Atlantic but also takes us back through the centuries If New York is the pattern of the future, Paris definitely belongs to the past

Take a stand on the junction of Fifth Avenue and Fortysecond Street and watch the pedestrians No one walks They all hustle and hurry, looking neither to the left nor to the right, their mind fixed on the day's business. But on Champs Elysees if you see someone in a hurry, you can be sure he is an American tourist Not a Frenchman, much less a Parisian For, the true son of Paris never even walks He prefers to stroll along at a leisurely pace, looking at things and people on the way, drinking in the beauty of the sunlit promenades of his fascinating city In New York they have spacious 'highways' to accommodate as many as six streams of fast-moving automobile traffic In Paris the side-walks are broader than the roads The convenience of the pedestrian takes precedence over the needs of the motorist

This contrast with New York is marked in other ways, too Right through the city flows the river Seine—a dark, lazy stream, which seems to be attuned to the slow tempo of Paris And along its bank one may always see, dotted here and there, scores of anglers I have stood for hours

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on a bridge and watched them. They seldom, if at all, catch any fish. Nor do they seem to be interested in making a catch. Smoking, reading a paper or a book, frequently helping themselves to a flask of the inevitable Vin Rouge, they just sit, philosophically contemplating the river. They certainly look like having discovered the secret of life—how to enjoy it, to one's own satisfaction.

I spend most of my time sitting in various restaurants and leisurely sipping innumerable cups of coffee. So does everyone else. Half of the broad pavement is occupied by tables and mostly we sit out watching the stream of humanity flow by. That British tradition of privacy during meals which manifests itself in hot and ill-ventilated grill rooms, dark little cubicles and 'private rooms' is completely absent in Paris. Here restaurants are more than 'eating houses'. They are more like informal clubs. Order a cup of coffee or a bottle of wine and you may sit here for hours, write letters on stationery provided free, read French or foreign newspapers, exchange amorous glances with *demi-mondes* more or less officially attached to the premises or gossip with your friends on any subject under the sun. The restaurants on Montparnasse are particularly known for their gatherings of intellectuals, artists and students. Here you may meet the future Michael Angelos and Gaguins as well as charlatans who pretend to be great artists just because they have acquired a studio and long hair. They may often be seen preying upon credulous American millionaire tourists or romance-hungry dowagers from across the English channel.

I arrived in Paris at a time when the fate of Europe hung in the balance. The Czechoslovakian crisis was approaching the Zero Hour. One could sense the spectre

of war haunting this gay metropolis And as one strolled along the gay boulevards, sat in the world's most magnificent parks, looked at the wealth of architecture and sculpture that may be seen at every street-corner and generally breathed in that atmosphere of intellectual freedom and cultural awareness, one could not help thinking that all these things may be no more It was symptomatic of that fearful hour that the number of leisurely anglers on the banks of the Seine visibly decreased

I went to the Louvre and discovered that this world-famous repository of art was not drawing its usual crowds of art-lovers and artists Art and air-raids do not go together and I found preparations in progress for the removal of valuable paintings and sculpture to a safe refuge in the event of the crisis developing into a war However, despite the war clouds, there were some people about in the galleries which, I confess, I found hopelessly overcrowded Deathless masterpieces are lost in a profusion of second rate paintings and the immortal Mona Lisa is flanked on either side by two miniatures showing mounted knights in armour, so close that it is almost impossible to view it without distraction And yet the picture has infinite charm, an aroma of warmth and life, which impressed even a prosaic man like me I looked at it fascinated Then as I moved on I noticed a seedy-looking artist in an indescribably shabby over-coat looking at the picture as if he would devour it with his hungry eyes I felt that he resented others sharing the view of Mona Lisa with him After an hour when I returned from my round of the other galleries I found him standing in exactly the same place, with the same expression of jealous devotion on his face

A big chubby-faced American tourist, obviously rich, paused in front of the picture, looked at it from behind

PARADOX OF PARIS

horn-rimmed spectacles, consulted the catalogue and said to his companion, "Say, how much would it cost me to buy that?" Then he passed on

A youthful pair, in smart sporting clothes, came strolling. The girl halted to powder her nose. The boy glanced at the subtle smile of the serene Mona Lisa and declared "No sex-appeal". They passed on. The artist threw a contemptuous glance in their direction and continued to study the picture from a new angle

"Points of view", I muttered and moved on

There are different ways of looking at Mona Lisa. Equally varied are the visitors' impressions of Paris

Is Paris the most cultured town in the world? It is not for me to doubt it. There are other great cities, perhaps, where one may find a larger number of cultural centres—academies, universities, art galleries, museums and libraries. But is there a place with which are associated names of so many distinguished savants and literateurs, artists and musicians? In London and Berlin, in Milan and New Delhi, roads and streets are invariably named after rulers, bureaucrats and generals. It is only in Paris that you find places named after philosophers, thinkers and poets. In the Pantheon, memorials have been put up not only to the heroes who fought for the French Revolution but also to those whose writings inspired this great rising of the people. Nor does Paris recognise national barriers in according recognition to literary figures. If there are parks and roads and streets named after Rousseau and Voltaire and Zola and Balzac, there are also Rue Shakespeare and Boulevard Housman. For centuries Paris has been the haven of refuge for revolutionary writers and artists from all over the world. The French-

man has inherited from the Revolution a love of liberty and sympathy for the oppressed which survives to this day, despite the Imperialist commitments of the ruling class. Of all the capitals of Europe (and even America), Paris is the only place where the coloured man may feel at home and not be subjected to discriminatory treatment. French imperialism in the colonies may be no better than the British or Dutch imperialism but the average Frenchman does strike me as being tolerant and cosmopolitan in his social behaviour.

For democrats, Paris has special significance because of its historic associations with the events and personalities of the French Revolution. I went round the city with a party of tourists but was annoyed to find that the guide deputed by the travel agency was an unashamed royalist who insisted on calling the revolutionaries "rabble" and moved the sentimental American women to tears by recounting the pathetic fate of "poor little Marie". He hardly allowed us to pause for a minute before the statue of Joan of Arc and rushed through Place Bastille without saying anything about its significance. But I returned there later, alone, to look at the world's strangest revolutionary memorial. For, there is no memorial! The revolutionaries had determined that they shall leave not a trace of the prison of Bastille which had stood there as a symbol of oppression. They were true to their words. An open square bears testimony to the revolutionary will of a people.

But there are many people who do not think of Paris in the terms of Bastille. The French Revolution is something which they read about in history in their school days and, since, have duly forgotten. They are drawn to Paris not by the fame of Notre Dame or the Louvre but

by its reputation as the gayest city in the world And when they say "Gay" with reference to Paris, there is a peculiar twinkle in their eyes, a significant twist to their smiling lips They say "Gay Paris" in a hushed tone which hints at strange sex orgies and vistas of feminine beauties on parade Though they will not admit it even to themselves, when they think of Paris they think only of its cabarets, night clubs and brothels

Their imagination, aflame by the nude photographs in "Paris Magazines" (mostly printed in London and New York'), they arrive in Paris determined to have a "good time" And, true to its reputation, the red light district of Paris serves to them all the vices of the world Blind to the economic and sociological implications of this sordid trade in human flesh, they leave the city without having seen anything but what they had come to see and spiced accounts of their adventures and escapades are circulated among their friends The reputation of Paris as the greatest vice centre of the world is once again confirmed. No doubt it deserves it There are in Paris more perversities and degradations of human body and soul than even the most daring writer of purple fiction could ever describe

But a mistake is made when Frenchmen, especially Parisians, are regarded as libertines, solely preoccupied with sex It is not the natives of Paris but foreigners who keep the vice centres running Even in more or less "innocent" cabarets as Folies Bergere the audience is mostly composed of British and American tourists The average Parisian, I found, is far more interested in international politics or his particular trade union than in the "hot" spots of his city And among the aristocracy and the upper middle class, the moral standard is almost Vic-

torian in its strict conformity to orthodox and conventional behaviour

What seems true, however, is that the French take sex for granted and do not seek to veil it in hypocritical pretensions. Their Government prefer to have registered brothels under their control rather than have soliciting in the streets. But I suspect this attitude, though it appears rational, is based on the assumption of an inferior status for women. It is nearer the attitude of ancient Romans than the Soviet Russians who abolished prostitution and all other forms of sex exploitation by guaranteeing the economic security of both men and women.

It is a paradox, this Paris! Memorials to revolutionary and republican writers stand in the shadows of royal palaces, the monstrously ugly steel structure of Eiffel Tower dwarfs the noble dome of the Pantheon, the Metro trains thunder under the foundations of the Louvre, wine is served free with meals but a caraffe of water costs a lot, brothels rub shoulders with college buildings and pornographic pictures are openly sold on the steps of the church of Notre Dame!

Hotel St Paul,

Paris,

16th September, 1938



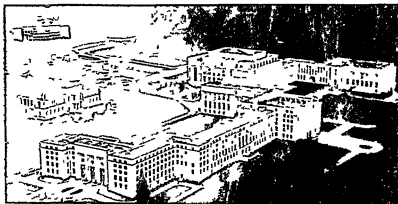
PANDIT NEHRU
and the author in the lobby
of Palais de Nations



LITVINOV
discussing European situa-
tion with a French delegate



INDIAN DELEGATES
Sir Sultan Ahmed, Sir N N Sircar, Sir Shanmukham Chetty



"DEAD BIRD, NEW CAGE"
A general view of the new home of the League of Nations

"DEAD BIRD, NEW CAGE"

"In order to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security

**by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war,
by the prescription of open, just and honourable
relations between nations . "**

—Covenant of the League of Nations.

The very atmosphere is unreal, uninspiring

It is a huge, irregularly shaped straggling building, with thousands of windows. It is in no particular style of architecture. The general effect is one of tiresome uniformity, stark neatness—like a hospital with its white-washed wards.

There are miles upon miles of corridors and the floor is so smooth and polished that it is difficult to walk without slipping. Quiet-toned attendants noiselessly flit about, oily-tongued diplomats stand talking in groups. They have come from some fifty-eight different countries—in correct alphabetical order, from Afghanistan to Yugoslavia—but, symbolically enough, they are all dressed alike in sombre black, the uniform of the "City" of London.

The corridors are lined on either side with rooms for members of the League Secretariat. In each of these sits a man—usually a young man—well-fed, well-dressed, often intelligent but with an expression of supreme boredom and cynicism on his face. For, he has no work to do. In many of these rooms you would find dry ink pots on the desks, empty baskets await papers that never come, reference books lie unopened on the shelves, maps

stare at one accusingly from the walls. It is not that they are lazy or do not wish to work. I met some who, tired of idling, contrived to get extra jobs to do for the League or suggested extension of their departmental activities to keep themselves busy. It is not that they are disloyal to the ideals of the League of Nations. Many of them came with idealistic notions of helping to create a better world order, of sharing the trials of establishing the foundations of peace. They are disillusioned to-day and go about burdened with that sense of futility which, I found, pervades almost every department of the League of Nations.

The bell rings and journalists from every corner of the globe troop into what are undoubtedly the finest and most spacious press galleries in the world. We are in the world. We are in the Assembly Hall whose very dimensions awe one into hushed silence. Down below we watch the delegates stroll in leisurely with an air of indifference, if not amused contempt. The President sits on a raised dais at the other end of the hall and but for his gleaming spectacles and his prominent nose one would not know that it was Mr. De Valera. It is amusing to reflect that the British delegates must submit to the authority of an ex-rebel.

The proceedings start with preliminary remarks by the President explaining the procedure and programme for the day. Then delegates start speaking. Worn-out platitudes, pious hopes, hypocritical regrets and diplomatically non-committal statements fill the air. Each speech has to be translated after it is finished and frequently the interpreter addresses a practically empty house. The other delegates have walked out—to have a smoke, to get themselves photographed, to 'phone for an extra dish for their lunch or merely to exchange gossip with their friends.

A device for simultaneous translation of each speech through telephones installed on every seat in the House is being experimentally tried and I am surprised that the arrangements are so crude as compared to the World Youth Congress in Poughkeepsie where one could listen to every speech in English, French or Spanish without any difficulty. Even in the matter of mechanical efficiency the veteran diplomats have yet to learn from the youth.

With unvarying monotony the session drags on. Many of the delegates may be seen asleep on their comfortable seats and are known in the Press Room as the "Sleeping Beauties of Geneva". The only time they show signs of life is at the end of each speech when, with an undisguised feeling of relief, they get up from their seats and after formally congratulating the speaker stroll out while the translation is going on. Most of the speeches are printed and made available to the delegates who are thus not even required to listen to them when they are being actually delivered.

Like all bureaucratic organisations, everything is done here according to certain fixed formulas. One of these unwritten tenets of the League procedure is that delegates shall refrain from talking about realities. Vague generalities are preferred. A delegate may thus read a school-boy essay on "International Co-operation" or on "The Virtues of Peace" but if he named the aggressors who imperil world peace and make international co-operation impossible, that would be unpardonable.

The speeches of the Chinese and the Spanish delegates were in the nature of a rude shock to this gathering of bored and complacent diplomats. As, each in his turn, Dr Wellington Koo and Senor Del Nayo, indicted the League for its criminally apathetic attitude towards their

countries and appealed to the delegates to apply sanctions against the aggressors if they really believed in collective security, I watched the reactions of the audience. Not a trace of emotion. They might have as well been listening to a balance sheet being read out at a company directors' meeting instead of hearing the account of two great battles for human liberty—battles that are being fought in the face of heavy odds and despite their own treacherous betrayals. What struck me, however, as the very limit of hypocrisy was the way in which, one after another, the delegates went up to the Chinese and Spanish spokesmen and congratulated them on their speeches. If the issues involved had not been so vital, I would have been amused by this exhibition of "polite" behaviour which we were taught in our school debating societies. But it caused in me a feeling of nausea and I left the meeting in disgust.

I was not surprised when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who is staying here with some friends and whom I happened to meet in the lobby of the *Palais des Nations* pointedly refused to attend any meeting of this sham 'League of Nations'.

Manchuria Abyssinia Spain China Czechoslovakia. Whatever is the next chapter in the League of Nations record of betrayals I will not be surprised. For, I have seen now in what an atmosphere of unreality it works. It is no use blaming the delegates who are, perhaps, nice people individually. Few of them—least of all those sent by the Government of India—seem to have any illusions about the League. I talked to some of them and they were surprisingly enough quite frank about the steady degeneration of the League. Some, from the smaller countries, are appalled by the subtle way the League has

been alienated from all its original aims. What is even more significant, they point out, is the steady restriction of its authority. Nothing reveals the impotence of the League more than its attitude during the Czechoslovakian crisis. I attended the meetings of the League Assembly at a time when the attention of the entire world was focussed on the developments in Central Europe. But while the British Premier went about bartering a free country, Geneva remained unconcerned and even uninformed. The revival of the Four Power Pact not only throws Britain into the arms of the anti-League Fascist powers but also takes the world back to the era of power politics and imperialistic alignments. The League may now be given a decent burial. A visitor from Spain, when shown round the huge new building of the League, made a most appropriate comment when he quoted a proverb of his country 'Dead bird, New Cage'.

And yet it is a pity that Wilson's dream should have ended so disastrously. Not only because a regenerated League of Nations, really based on a system of collective security and freedom and equality of all nations, is the only hope for a peaceful world, but also because some of its technical departments are doing useful work at the present time. Disgusted with the proceedings of the Assembly I spent the rest of my time trying to investigate the other activities of the League and found much useful research and organizational work is being done in the spheres of economic, social and humanitarian welfare. The International Labour Office, the campaign against narcotics, the centre for research on leprosy and the office for refugees indicate some measure of useful activity. Of course, most of this work is mainly concerned with research and collection of data, and is far from an adequate

return for the vast amount of money and energy expended on the League

Whatever else may be said against the League it cannot be denied that its home is situated in idyllic surroundings Geneva was, indeed, a happy choice Set on the shores of a beautiful lake, with green hills as a background, and enjoying a bracing climate, it may yet be the capital of the world

*Hotel Nouvelle Gare,
Geneva,
20th September, 1938*

IN FASCIST ITALY

"Imagine an Italy in which thirty-six millions should all think the same, as if their brains were made in an identical mould, and you would have a madhouse, or rather, a kingdom of utter boredom or imbecility."

—Signor Mussolini (1912)

"We are in the presence of a nationalist, clerical, conservative Italy which proposes to make of the sword its law, of the army its school. We foresaw this moral perversion. Strong nations do not have to descend to this sort of insane carnival."

—Signor Mussolini (1912)

The Duce himself welcomed me to Italy as our train crossed the Swiss frontier and wearily puffed its way into this land of Caesars—and slaves. His unsmiling face, grim outthrust jaw and hand raised in Fascist salute, was blazoned on every wall. The railway stations that we passed were literally draped in flags and covered with huge posters bearing slogans and Signor Mussolini's portraits. He glared at you angrily from magazine covers on the book-stalls, you could not escape it in refreshment rooms and at some stations the Dictator was being "sold" to the public in packets of picture post cards. There was little doubt that I had arrived in Mussoliniland!

Uniforms were prominent everywhere and black-shirted young men swaggered about with a distinctly aggressive air. Are these, I wondered, the heirs to the classicism of Greece, the renaissance of Rome? In their crude manners and vainglorious gestures they only proved themselves to be the successors of the gladiators and the

jingo lackeys of the Caesars. Some of them proved to be Customs officials who frowned upon my British passport, brusquely turned out the contents of my suit case and unnecessarily scrutinized such "friendly" papers as the London "Times" and the "Daily Mail" which I had bought before leaving Zurich. After they were gone and the train was on its way to Milan I looked around the compartment to find someone who could talk English. Most of them were reading newspapers among which I duly recognised the Duce's own paper, "Il Popolo d'Italia". The front pages were monopolized by the dictator's latest speech, the highlights of which were picked out in flaming headlines. After several false starts I did discover someone who could speak English though he admitted it rather reluctantly as if it was something unpatriotic. This was due, I learnt later, to the prevailing anti-British feeling which has been assiduously spread ever since Britain (however half-heartedly) lent support to the "Sanctions" against Italy during the Abyssinian campaign.

This was the week of the final phase of the Czechoslovakian crisis when the peace of Europe, of the world, hung in the balance. Signor Mussolini was then touring that very part of the country through which we were passing (hence the flags and the portraits galore!) and had just then announced his solidarity with Nazi Germany. Tactfully I broached the topic, opening up the conversation with my fellow-traveller. I had asked for it and got it. All the bombastic platitudes, the fire and thunder of Il Duce's gun-carriage speeches, amusing self-pity for "poor Italy denied a place in the sun by Britain and France" mingled with the equally comic assertion of "the regeneration of the glory of ancient Rome"—it was all there. We, the Indians, were invited to join hands with the Fas-

cist powers to overthrow British imperialism and my modest reply that we were not interested in merely a change of masters was lost in his gushing eloquence. Indeed, it provoked him to make an outrageous attack on Mahatma Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence against which he commended Il Duce's philosophy of "force triumphant".

Now I am a sufficiently experienced reporter not to be provoked by such outbursts. But I was greatly surprised, almost shocked, to hear this homily on violence delivered by such a meek-looking man. He was small and thin, with beady little eyes, glossy hair and a neat black moustache. He was obviously a clerk or petty trader and, though far from being an intellectual, seemed to be fairly well-educated. There was nothing in his physical make-up to suggest such a violent faith. Or was it, I wondered, that Fascism had provided an outlet for the innate inferiority complex of the "little man" which, otherwise, often makes them verbal bullies and voracious readers of blood-and-thunder fiction? Again and again, during my short stay in Italy, I was to encounter this same mentality which is being cultivated by a servile press, radio and blustering demagogues, and which threatens to transform a race of artists and men of imagination into a legion of jingoes. That there is an underground feeling of dissatisfaction one cannot doubt though it is impossible to gauge its strength. In the open there is no evidence of intellectual freedom, of individual convictions. There is only one voice you hear, the voice of Mussolini. "As if their brains were made in an identical mould"—even as Il Duce himself once observed—twentyfive years ago!

Even an anti-Fascist like myself had to admire Milan at first sight. Broad, smooth roads, the impressive

modernistic buildings, the large factories, the glittering shops and department stores and above all, the model houses for workmen which were proudly displayed to me by my enthusiastic guide. One was easily impressed. But Milan proved to be the deceptive shop-front of Italy or, to vary the metaphor, the false teeth of Fascism. The air of prosperity which the city flaunts is restricted to the main business quarter, the model houses can accommodate only an infinitesimal part of the working class, the factories are run on regimented labour which is not allowed to organize for collective bargaining.

Whatever illusions were created by Milan were finally entombed amidst the crumbling walls of Venice. European and American tourists have a knack of finding "Romance" in all the ruins of the world. No wonder, then, that Venice has acquired such hallowed reputation. I found nothing picturesque in its ancient houses and the much-advertised canals with their dirty, slimy water. It takes one hour to move about the town in the gondolas which appear picturesque only in Hollywood films. Strange are the ways of "civilized" man who builds his ugly new towns on strictly utilitarian lines and then, swinging to the extreme, goes like a reverent pilgrim to all the ancient and mediaeval towns and revels in their "romantic" and "picturesque" ruins! The capitalist, of course, knows how to use this weakness of the "civilized" man. He manufactures "antiques" in factories and organizes conducted tours and luxury voyages to Bermuda and Bali, Peking and Venice.

A depressing air of forlorn decay hangs over the city of Venice, with its canals and narrow crooked alleys, the latter being strangely reminiscent of some old Indian towns. But what strikes one as the dominant feature of

Venice is the appalling, glaring poverty of its population. Nowhere outside India have I seen such pitiable destitution. Groups of unemployed men in rags hang about street corners enviously eyeing the tourists, children beg for alms while women may be seen washing the thread-bare linen or cooking in smoky kitchens

In Venice there are more guides than anywhere else in the world. For, this is the only occupation open to its multitude of unemployed. No sooner do they observe a stranger than he is surrounded by a crowd of volunteers all anxious to show him the beauties of their city. I picked out a young man who could speak English and looked intelligent. Actually I had nowhere particular to go and asked him if he would accompany me to the station. He was quite surprised when he found that I knew the way already and that the only purpose in taking him with me was to have a talk with him.

"Well, Signor, what do you do?", I asked when we were on our way.

Before giving an answer, the young Venetian looked round to see we were not being followed and then replied in a tone which would not have pleased Il Duce, "Nothing." He spat out the word with such contemptuous vehemence that I was quite taken aback. Surely this was not the way for a patriot-Fascist to speak before a foreigner.

"Are there many unemployed in Venice?", I hazarded the question.

Again he looked round cautiously. "Not in Venice only but all over the country. I have looked for work in every city."

"But doesn't the Duce find work for you?"

He remained silent for a little while and spoke only when we had entered a desolate narrow alley. "I beg you, *Signor*, don't make me say things which may get me into trouble"

I respected his caution. What he had not said was in his eyes—peculiarly tired, restless eyes, the eyes of a man who sees through things but is helpless to change his destiny. We had now reached the station and as I shook hands with him he seemed reluctant to accept my present of money which he had actually earned by walking along with me for almost a mile and a half.

Are there many like him, I wondered after he was gone, who feel so unenthusiastic and mutely critical about Fascism? In a few days' stay in a country with an alien tongue it is difficult to measure suppressed public opinion. But here and there I did find evidence of suppressed unrest. The issue of Mussolini going to war in aid of Hitler was then haunting the people and one could see that such a war would not be popular. No one would, of course, say so but you could not mistake their attitude which might be expressed by a shrug of the shoulder, a sigh of uneasy apprehension or just refusing to share the official enthusiasm for the anti-Comintern pact. I was not surprised when the day after I returned to Paris, I read of serious anti-war riots in Milan and other cities of Italy.

Except among the ranks of the Fascists there is little enthusiasm to be found in Italy either for Duce's war-mongering ideology or for the neo-Roman Empire which has been established in the deserts of Libya and Abyssinia. Now and again thousands of unemployed are shipped to the

colonies and the event is marked by right royal pageantry. Flags are waved, speeches made and the ship leaves with cheers and booming of guns. But I saw several hundred of these colonists as they disembarked at Venice on their way back from Masawa. Broken, dispirited men in dirty rags. This time they were not greeted with cheers. Indeed they were allowed to leave the boat only after all the foreign passengers had disembarked and gone their way. It was a pathetic sight as they came along the gangway in single file. They had been sent to the colonies full of hope and promise and, disillusioned and broken down in health, they returned now to face the prospect of an unemployed life at home. No wonder their return was not made an occasion for a Fascist rally. On the weary face of each one of them was writ large the failure of Mussolini's neo-imperialism.

Paris,

25th September, 1935

"HAVE YOU GOT YOUR GAS MASK?"

"Out of this nettle Danger I pluck the flower Safety."

**—William Shakespeare and
Neville Chamberlain.**

"Let us then praise ourselves. The peoples of Britain

**For the last few weeks we have walked in the Valley
of the Shadow.**

And we have been unafraid"—Sunday Pictorial.

The old land-lady was obviously resigned to the fate of keeping Indian boarders and received us with an indulgent smile. Friends had arranged a room for me in advance and I was not to be without shelter on my first day in London. Hardly had I decided to settle down and open my suit cases than the old lady once again appeared and said in a matter-of-fact tone, as if asking me whether I had brought my tooth brush along, "Have you got your gas mask?"

"Have you got your gas mask?"

I went and got it, of course, from the neighbourhood church where an A.R.P. branch had been opened. There were about a dozen other people, men and women and two children. Four girl volunteers were helping them to try different sizes and were repeating to each the set formula of instructions for use. I had gone to get the gas mask in a flippant mood but somehow when I entered the room and saw the expressions on the faces of the people present, I realized in a moment the gravity of the situation.

HAVE YOU GOT YOUR GAS MASK?

Most of them were simple, lower middle class folk, tradesmen, clerks and their wives, who knew little about international politics and were naturally nervous about the possibility of war. There was a muffled scream as a woman saw her gas-masked face in the mirror. A child cried as they tried to fit a gas mask on his face. I quickly got my mask and came away.

In London that day everyone seemed to be asking each other only one question: *Have you got your gas mask?*

In these six words, it appeared to me, was summed up the gravity of the world situation—the haunting fear of war, the terrible realization on the part of the civilian population that they would be in the first line of fire and their desperate search for safety appliances however inadequate or insufficient. In one word PANIC!

These have been anxious days, in the capitals of Europe.

A week ago I was in Switzerland and even across that earthly paradise lay the shadow of the Swastika, the shadow of war. I left Geneva with its futile never-ending talk about peace and arrived in Zurich to see anti-aircraft guns being mounted on strategic positions and bomb-proof shelters being reinforced. Public subscriptions were being collected for the National Air Force.

The miniature Army of this peaceful, neutral country was being mobilized for defence against possible German attack and the Swiss friend with whom I stayed cleaned his rifle every day, ready to join his conscript detachment the moment the summons came. What surprised me was that the Swiss in these parts, who are Germans—racially, culturally and linguistically—have no sympathy whatso-

ever with the Nazis, whose expansionist dreams threaten the integrity of Switzerland. Not all Germans living out of the Reich are anxious to come within the Fatherland!

The frontier on either side was being closely guarded as I crossed into Italy. By means of radio, newspapers, speeches and propaganda posters the people were being prepared for war. The day I was in Milan, crisis seemed imminent. I will not forget the anxious moments we spent, sitting by the radio, in the house of Mr Ahuja, the Indian Trade Commissioner, wondering whether the storm would burst that very evening and the frontiers would be closed before we could leave for Paris.

Back in France our train was delayed several hours at various stations to allow troop trains to pass. "Où allez vous?" (Where are you going?), someone in our compartment asked one of the soldiers who replied "Berlin"! in a tone which had more irony than humour in it. Whenever I hear of mobilization I remember the grim, bitter resignation on the face of that French soldier.

In Paris, which I had left two weeks ago in a comparatively calmer atmosphere, the clouds of war hung low again. Hundreds of Americans were leaving every week for the safety of their country across the protective Atlantic, though one wondered, in case a war did break out, how long they would be able to keep out of it. With my friend Enver Kureishi, who has just come from India, I went to Sen Lis to meet Louis Bromfield, the well-known American author whom I had met years ago when he was in India and had come to our University at Aligarh. His novel of India, "The Rains Came", is one of the best-sellers of the year and is shortly to be filmed.

But it was not about novels and films that we talked but about wars and its consequences. He has sent away his wife and children to America but is remaining behind to watch developments. Having lived in France for many years, he looks upon the country as his virtual home and we learnt that he has offered his own services as well as his house and his cars to the Government of France to be used for any purpose in the emergency of war. In journalistic circles in Paris we had heard that Louis Bromfield might, if war broke out, go to United States to rouse public opinion in favour of lining up with the democracies and one felt a vague thrill talking about politics with this man who might play a big role in the war that hovered above us.

Two old French ladies, Bromfield's neighbours, dropped in to talk with him. With tears in their eyes they talked about the grim possibility of war. Their sons, I learnt, are in the army and naturally they, like millions of mothers all over the world, were anxious for their safety. It was raining outside and the leaden, grey skies seemed to portend impending doom. For a few moments there was tense silence. We—two Indians, one American and two French women—, linked together by the common danger of war, seemed to be waiting for something to happen.

And it did happen. The telephone rang. It was the American Embassy calling. The news had just come over the wires that President Roosevelt had sent a personal message, appealing for peace, to the Dictators. Good old Roosevelt, I felt, always doing something spectacular and splendid! Did he, far away in Washington, know that even if his message did not deter the Dictators in their madness, it at least brought a ray of hope to two old

French women, fearing for the lives of their sons, in a little village called Sen Lis.

But that moment of relief and hope was a temporary phase and the world is again faced with the prospect of war. As Chamberlain flies back and forth on his mission of appeasement, trenches are being dug in Hyde Park and everyone asks everyone else, "Have you got your gas mask?" Oblivious of the scanty protection this ugly, suffocating contraption affords against a really serious gas attack, just as they are ignorant about the uselessness of the so-called shelters against air raids, the people, in their pitiful desperation, cling hopefully to their gas masks, like frightened children.

And one can neither scorn them nor laugh at them. One can only pity them, for, it seems to me, they are the victims of a great hoax. Even after all the alarums and excursions, Mr Chamberlain's aerial trips, the trench-digging and distribution of gas masks, Czechoslovakia has been betrayed in precisely the same manner as the London "Times", the mouth-piece of British reaction, had suggested three weeks ago. Then why all this panic, this parade of balloon barrages, these anti-aircraft guns being rushed about, this invariable question, "Have you got your gas mask?"

Because, when first the suggestion of cession of Czech territory to Germany was mooted, there was general opposition to such a treachery from every quarter in Britain. But now, when the housewives all over the country have been frightened by the alleged imminence of war, when the small man in trade and industry has been faced with the grim prospect of conscription and, incidentally, when munition manufacturers have 'cleaned' billions of pounds.

HAVE YOU GOT YOUR GAS MASK?

by the patriotic service of "speeding up rearmament" (A strong Britain is the best guarantee of peace—or so they say'),—now hardly a voice is raised against the shameless betrayal of a free people. The gas mask has choked the people into acquiescence.

While going for a stroll near Earls Court station last night we saw and heard the first British fascist. He was one of those "small men", with a grudge against the world, who are invariably the first to join any movement of protest. They arrive at an aggressive political philosophy not from any intellectual conviction but from a general sense of grievance. The specimen we saw carried a chair with him on which he stood and harangued whatever little crowd he could gather. It was a fantasy of jumbled politics, the outpourings of an over-heated brain. But what he said was not without significance.

He began by painting a lurid, frightening picture of Soviet Russia, "revealed" how the Reds were carrying on underground political agitation in England, abused the Jews as being responsible for the degeneration of British youths and declared that there was no reason why Britain should have fought for the "bastard state" of Czechoslovakia against Hitler who was a great lover of peace and had saved Europe from the Bolshevik menace. "Thank God", he said in his peroration, "that we have a man like Chamberlain at the head of our country. He is doing exactly what Sir Oswald Mosley has all the time been saying."

And, then, rather illogically but very significantly, he concluded, "Remember that we have no quarrel with Germany or Italy. Remember that our enemies are only Communists and Jews. Remember that our first loyalty

is to His Majesty the King and, after him, to our Leader, Oswald Mosley" Then he gave a fascist salute, jumped from the chair and, grabbing it, walked away Three excited youngsters who had also raised their arms in salute followed him The rest of us melted away laughing A policeman, looking down from his height, said, "That bloke is just mad Not dangerous" As I came back home, I did not agree with the policeman That "bloke" may have been mad but he is certainly dangerous Madness, yoked to chauvinism and race complex, spreads! British fascists may be a small number to-day but Chamberlain and the "Cliveden Set" are fast evolving an indigenous brand which may prove an ally of continental fascism

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I shall take back the gas mask with me to India, a reminder of the war that might have been and the war that might yet be!

*Earls Court,
London
October, 1938*

ACCENT ON (H)OXFORD

"And so we formed ourselves into clubs, concocted newspapers wore ties varying with the noblest shade of blue to the bloodiest tint of red, and extracted a great deal of pleasure out of it."

—Beverley Nichols in "Twenty-five".

"Is this the bus to Oxford", I asked of a porter in blue over-alls at the Bus Station

"You mean Hoxford, sir? Yes, this is the bus."

Just then a young man in grey 'bags', tweed coat and an impossibly "loud" red-and-blue muffler came along "Is this the bus for Oxfa'd ?", he asked of the porter

"You mean Hoxford, Sir," the proletarian replied eyeing the young man with evident hostility, "Yes, this is the bus "

Having thus made doubly sure I took my seat in the aforementioned bus It was a dark, damp day in London and you could cut the fog with a knife I was naturally happy to be able to leave it even for a day or two Evidently there were not many people travelling that day by bus to Oxford and besides me and the young man in the red-and-blue muffler (he was literally in it, so completely was he draped in the blanket-like thing'), there were only a few seedy-looking men going to some villages en route

At the scheduled time the bus started The young man, obviously a raw undergrad, self-consciously busied himself reading alternately the cinema fan magazine and Aldous Huxley's "Eyeless In Gaza" which he carried with him.

Travelling at a brisk speed we soon left behind not only the London suburbs but, joy of joys!, also the London fog. Anti-Imperialism apart, I had to admire the beauty of the English countryside. Everything—the green pastures, the prim little cottages, the tiny churches, children playing cricket on the village commons, fat brown cows browsing in the meadows—was so neat and proper that it almost appeared unreal, like something out of a picture book. Through avenues of lovely old trees, their leaves turned golden in the autumn but still bravely withstanding the advent of winter, across rolling downs stretching far into the silver grey horizon, in and out of hamlet, village and town, the bus bore us towards Oxford till at last a few miles before the University town it stopped on the crest of a gently sloped hill. It was worth while to have travelled all the way from London only for the view of Oxford I had from this spot. Amidst cluster of trees the spires and towers of the various colleges stood clearly sketched against the cloudy sky. A picture of peace and quiet, so different from the smoky, ugly panorama of London I could understand now why Oxford men grow sentimental over the beauty of their alma mater and why, at “Twenty-five”, Beverley Nichols was moved to say, “Oxford from the hills is a dream eternally renewed”

It was, however, not from aesthetic motives that the bus had been stopped at this point. It was only to collect our tickets and to enquire if any of us wanted to reserve his seat in advance on the return journey. Half an hour later I was roaming through the crowded, animated streets of Oxford, rubbing shoulders with hundreds of young men who might have been the twin brothers of my fellow-traveller in the bus, similarly clad in grey ‘bags’, tweed coats and mufflers in positively screaming colours, with

the addition of a black rag fluttering over their shoulders—an apology for the gown without which an Oxford undergraduate may not move out of his college

One ought either to come to Oxford and stay here for at least some months or one ought to return after having a glimpse of the town from the crest of the hill. It is unfair to the place to judge it in two days. Seen from a casual tourist's eyes, Oxford is a depressing little town with a few picturesque old cathedrals and cloistered colleges, its only distinguishing feature being a vast quantity of youth seen walking up and down the main street, flitting from college to college or arriving in noisy groups on bicycles to attend lectures in the morning. To know something of the pulsating life within the ivy-covered walls one must make a longer stay here.

In India, as in other parts of the British empire, we have been taught to look upon Oxford with awe and respect. If the battle of Waterloo was fought on the playing fields of Eton, many a great parliamentary figure (we have been told) has been moulded in the Debating hall of the Oxford Union Society. Back in our own country, we often see a young man sporting a flamboyant tie on grey flannels and striking an "intellectual" pose with his talk of the Early English poets and the Modern Russian short-story writers, Baroque architecture and Epstein's sculpture, constantly reminding his awe-struck audience of the time "When I was up at Oxford." This species, drawn mostly from the leisured class, is to be encountered in the ranks of the Indian Civil Service, in Universities and colleges, in pseudo-intellectual gatherings where second-hand epigrams pass for first rate humour, long hair is supposed to signify profound intellect and ignorance about one's country masquerades as "progressivism" and "modernism."

but invariably at fashionable get-togethers where "high balls" are consumed by ex-cricket blues and pink socialists sport white ties and black 'tails' There are exceptions, of course, the few earnest youths who, coming from poor or lower middle class families, somehow manage by scholarships or loans to study at Oxford and turn out to be scholars rather than society figures Whatever be the case, "Oxon" is an honoured suffix in India, where foreign rule has put an exaggerated premium on University degrees brought from abroad, and Universities (like Aligarh where I was "up") strive for the distinction of being known as the Indian Oxford

Even in England strange legends have gathered round Oxford Every now and then an Archbishop or "Retired Colonel" writes to the "Times" alleging that the University students have become decadent, demoralized, unpatriotic, effeminate—in short, un-British! According to various critics, Oxford is the home of (1) Lost causes, (2) Degenerate sons of the aristocracy, (3) Bolshevik agents, (4) Bacchanalian profligates and (5) Anti-Christ To which indignant undergraduates reply by saying that they are serious-minded young men, engaged in intellectual and academic pursuits, who take a keen interest in various national and international problems and who claim and exercise the right to think for themselves Even a brief stay in Oxford convinced me that both these pictures are partly wrong—and partly right There is not one but two Oxfords, the Oxford which spends most of its time in sherry parties and wild nights, sports and superficial talk, mainly representative of the useless British aristocracy, is quite different from the Oxford which studies diligently, takes genuine interest in progressive political movements and generally tries to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the University for intellectual

pursuits Between these extremes there are all shades of Oxonians—arm-chair revolutionaries, poseurs, pseudo-intellectuals long-haired poets, brilliant but superficial debaters young political opportunists with an eye on a seat in Parliament On the whole, Oxford may be said to be representative of the upper class British youth Its class character is clearly marked True that quite a number of of the students from middle class come here on scholarships but even they have to acclimatize themselves to the essentially aristocratic traditions of Oxford Even in the democratic twentieth century the shadow of traditionalism and snobbery lies heavy over Oxford I was amazed to see a notice forbidding beggars and other persons in shabby clothes from walking on the University meadows Other relics of feudal and canonical England may be found in the ban on woman members in the Union Society and the gown which every student must put on when appearing in public Even the buildings have that style of old ecclesiastical architecture which forcefully reminds one that the Oxford colleges were originally religious seminaries Modern British education has yet to get rid of the haunting spectres of the past

The basic idea of establishing residential Universities was to keep the students in a purely academic atmosphere away from the hurly burly of cities Actually it has resulted in creating among the students ignorance of and contempt for the realities of life Rapidly changing political phenomena are naturally reacting on Oxford but on the whole the attitude of students to political and social problems seems to be either one of cynical indifference or an overbearing patronage The Union Society (which is said to have "a habit of producing Prime Ministers"), reflecting the intellectual and political interests of Oxford, is mostly concerned with superficial discussions in which cynicisms

and epigrams are hurled from one side of the House to the other in wordy warfare. Indeed, cynicism is the favourite pose of Oxford. The day I arrived was the one on which the most important Parliamentary bye-election between Mr Lindsay, the Master of Balliol, and Mr Quenton Hogg, the conservative candidate, was fought on the all-important issue of Chamberlain's Munich policy. Lindsay's supporters had worked up a most original and effective idea by displaying placards which read, "HITLER SAYS DON'T VOTE FOR LINDSAY." The eyes of the whole country and even foreign countries were upon Oxford, for the bye-election was to reveal whether there had been a noticeable change-over in the public opinion after the Munich betrayal. And what was Oxford doing? A few politically conscious students could be seen working for either of the candidates. But the vast majority of students showed little enthusiasm for the contest. The wits and wiseacres of the 'Varsity were polishing their epigrams for the week's debate in the Union Society where the subject for discussion was to be, "This House regrets that it ever came to Oxford!"

Anyway, I don't regret that I ever went to Oxford

London,
October, 1938

CAPITAL OF THE EMPIRE

"Watch the step of London now It is alert, purposeful, masterful, the step of a people unregimented and free, a people with faith in its rulers and faith in its destiny Seldom indeed the step that is halting, telling of aimlessness and indecision"

—A writer in London "Times"

Of all places in the world outside India, London is the one city where an Indian may reasonably expect to feel at home Through school and college he has been taught to respect and imbibe English culture and traditions, often at the expense of losing the cultural values of his own country He has read English history, is familiar with "1066 and all that" and can quote at will from Shakespeare or Milton He knows the dramatic associations of Drury Lane, and Baker Street brings to his mind the memory of Conan Doyle and his famous Sherlock Holmes If he went to Shanghai he might have difficulty in manipulating chop sticks but he is quite familiar with the use of knife and fork and, quite often, can even distinguish carvers from the rest of cutlery on the table With luck he may win a tennis Blue or get elected the President of his University Union and by a little practice he can easily acquire the Oxford accent

Why is it then, I asked myself and others during my five weeks' stay in the capital of the British Empire, that we do not feel comfortable here? Why is it that Indians feel much more at home in Paris where the local people speak a language we do not understand or in New York which is, materially, such a strong contrast with our own towns and cities? I seek the answer

The "digs" we are staying in are too small for our needs. We want a bigger apartment and study the classified advertisements in several daily newspapers and a journal entirely devoted to announcements about lodgings to let. We make a list and early next morning start on a round.

We knock at the nearest house which displays on the fencing a huge sign, "ROOMS AND APARTMENTS TO LET". The knock is answered by a domestic to whom we explain our mission.

"Oh, you want rooms", he says as if he had expected us to be looking around for kennels, and then after elaborate head-scratching adds, "There are no rooms to let now". We push off.

We have all heard about colour-bar but try to think the rooms must have been let since the advertisement appeared. But at least they might have removed that deceptive sign board!

The next on our list is a big house which, according to the advertisement, has "two-room and single room apartments". Hopefully we press the bell. Footsteps are heard descending the stairs, the bolt is drawn and the door is opened by a maid who almost screams with horror when she sees us. Perhaps she has been reading a thrilling tale of the jungle in which cannibals carry away a white damsel or maybe she has been to see a film showing the evil nature of these "darkies" and is naturally taken aback when suddenly confronted with three live specimens. With apprehensive determination she holds fast to the door.

"Rooms", we begin rather timidly in the presence of melodrama, but before another word has been uttered

there is a cry of "There're no rooms for ye" and bang! the door is slammed in our face

"Hysterical, that is what she is", someone comments rather unconvincingly and we move on to the third house on our list to the fourth, fifth, sixth. It is the same story everywhere, with slight variations of detail. It is either a frank "Sorry, we don't take Indians" or a hypocritical "We let them this morning" or a curt "Rooms? Not *here*!"

And thus, at last, we give up the attempt and return home. We are all boiling with rage, swearing at the colour-bar and, as our bitterness seeks another channel, uproarious with triumph. We have at last discovered a sore spot of London, the Achilles Heel of British Imperialism. Now let them, we say, utter those platitudes about solidarity of the Empire!

But, alas, even that mood is short-lived. On exchanging notes with other friends who have lived longer in England we find that our discovery is no discovery at all. Our experience we learn, has been the experience of almost every single Indian visitor to London. We probe the subject deeper. There are students who keep cuttings of all references to colour bar in the press. It makes a bulky record. Even high Government officials, coming to England on business of State have paid the same penalty for their brown skins. Many strongly-worded protests—from Indians as well as Englishmen—have appeared in the press. Even Die-hard Tories seem to realize that, in the interests of the Empire, such distinctions should be relaxed if not wholly abolished (Begad, Sir, Lord Beaverbrook is right. You can't make these natives Prime Ministers of provinces and then let landladies insult them. That might start a revolution!) And yet the colour bar is as strong as ever and, indeed, it has become such an established feature

of London that if you talk much about it you are accused of suffering from an inferiority complex Perhaps we do

* * * *

At a Canadian friend's place, the conversation having veered round to lodgings, I casually remark about our difficulty to get decent rooms

An English girl, a student of medicine and credited with being broad-minded, helpfully suggests "Oh, I know just the right place for you It is simply chock full of Indian students"

Segregation of the native quarters' I am immediately reminded of this old policy of British colonists But it would be discourteous to resent a remark made, I am sure, quite unwittingly and in good faith I simply reply, "Oh, thank you, but I would not like to live in a place which is chock full of Indian students" Someone tactfully changed the topic

On another occasion an English boy, Oxford undergraduate, naively said, "Look here, aren't you rubbing in this colour bar issue too much After all the Indian students do live somewhere"

Which is at least a better way of putting it than the complacent remark I once heard, "Oh, but I am sure the Indian boys like to live together"

A young English "intellectual" and "friend of India" recently argued with me that in the interests of collective security India should accept Dominion Status "After all, political haggling apart, you know there is not much difference between the two"

Perhaps not But I never heard of Canadian or Australian visitors to London being refused admission to hotels or lodging houses

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Perhaps we Indians are all too sensitive Perhaps we suffer from an inferiority complex Maybe, when we come to London, we imagine insults and take offence where none is meant On these lines I talk to a friend who feels rather too strongly on the subject

Next day as we are going by tube we find that while the rest of the coach is getting filled up our corner remains strangely empty At Hyde Park Corner there is a rush and the seats next to us are also occupied Some ladies enter at Green Park and have to stand as there is no vacant seat My friend gets up and courteously offers his seat but the lady in imitation fur coat sniffs and looks the other way The chivalrous boy is left standing rather foolishly After a minute an Englishman, with belated chivalry, offers his seat and the lady gratefully accepts

Maybe we were imagining an insult Perhaps the lady liked standing—until a seat was offered by a white man

Another friend goes to college He is the only Indian in a class of over fifty He is punctual at lectures There is always a seat left unoccupied on either side of him He sits there like an island Perhaps he is oversensitive if he notices that no one in his class talks to him, that they reply in unencouraging monosyllables when he talks to them¹

But uncouth landladies, hysterical maids, *nouveau riche* women in imitation fur coats, raw college boys are perhaps

not representative of the "better class" of Englishmen Is a college don? An Indian student goes to his tutor at the beginning of the term and says he wishes to take up a certain subject in his course He has come all the way from India to study that subject The professor, a well-known literary figure, shakes his head, "That is only for English students"

.

On Sunday morning the children of our neighbourhood play in the park, sometimes on the pavements Curiosity took me one day to see what they were playing Red Indians' It sounds a harmless enough game The theme is the massacre of a large number of Red Indians by strong upright Englishmen

The London Films production "The Drum" is a huge draw in London. As I pass the cinema I see a long line of School-boys waiting to be admitted Popular papers have certified the film to be "of special interest to children" Children are always taken to such "Empire films" to be shown how horribly wicked the "natives" are

Is it any wonder that they grow up with a strong colour prejudice which is often stronger than intellectual convictions? The word "native" has itself acquired an outlandish menacing significance While waiting for the tube one day I asked an Englishman, "Are you a native?"

"What?", he demanded refusing to believe his ears

"I said are you a native—a native of this country?"

He had a red face It became purple

CAPITAL OF THE EMPIRE

Having overcome the initial feeling of loneliness-cum-bitterness which every Indian must experience on arriving in London, I set to study this town and its people with as much objectivity as, in the circumstances, one can achieve

From the point of view of architecture I found London disappointing. It has hardly any really beautiful buildings to boast of though, with proper cloud effects or silhouetted against a moonlit sky, the Houses of Parliament and the Big Ben can be cleverly photographed to look impressive. Though, I believe, it is the biggest city in the world London lacks even the vulgar and strictly utilitarian grandeur of the New York sky-scrapers. The capital of the Empire could not even build a nobler cenotaph to commemorate the millions who died in the Great War. In Trafalgar Square the Admiral is perched on so high that it is difficult to see him, pathetically dwarfed by the mammoth advertisement of a well-known brand of whisky. Not far away is the famous 10, Downing Street, which has at least the dignity of being frankly unpretentious. It is edifying, however, to compare these "digs" of the Prime Minister with the palace of his subordinate, the Viceroy of India, in New Delhi. How would the British tax-payer, I wonder, react to the introduction of a little item in the next National Budget—"For Prime Minister's Palace Two million pounds sterling"?

Take your stand at any street corner or at a cross-roads in the suburbs. Look east or west, north or south, a depressing vista of ugly houses, their frontage blackened by fog and smoke, will greet your eye. And they are all alike. If it were not for number plates and, in the suburbs, for the variety of such picturesque names as "The Nest" and

"The Nook", one cannot distinguish one from the other British democrats often talk contemptuously of the regimentation under dictatorships. If only they could "demobilize" this gloomy legion of similar buildings which is the architectural counter-part of the sartorial regimentation of the bowler and the black coat!

I am inclined to agree with a friend of mine who thinks the only two impressive institutions in London are the "tube" and the "bobby". The underground railway system does credit to the London County Council and the six-footer policemen whose virtues are often over-estimated and sometimes made subject of music hall jokes are certainly the most efficient upholders of law and order that I have so far met. Without trying to be facetious I may add that the only other thing that impressed me in London is the English horse. Used to seeing the puny, half-starved creatures that draw "Victorias" in Bombay, the horses in London appeared to me of a giant breed. Huge and strongly-built, they walk with a measured step and lend dignity even to the humble task of pulling a baker's cart.

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But, alas, you can't have thoroughbred human beings and even in conservative, taboo-ridden England, noble birth is no longer a passport to position and power. Peers of the Realm advertise in the bulletins of transatlantic steamers offering to act as Guides and show millionaire Americans round London—for a fee!

Such things should not be allowed in the interests of maintaining the dignity of the Empire in the eyes of the "natives". The fiction of the perfect, noble, omnipotent Englishman is one of the props of the empire. But no

sooner does the native arrive in London than the process of disillusionment begins. Are these, he asks himself, the super-men who rule over me and my people? He prods them and finds they are—only human.

One has heard a lot about the hygienic habits of Englishmen. It was Aldous Huxley, perhaps, who claimed to belong to a "bath-taking, shirt-changing race". And yet when you tell your landlady that you would be having a bath every morning she frowns. Her English boarders are often content with a weekly bath. In many hotels, all over Europe, a bath costs as much as a square meal. No wonder many people prefer to have the square meal!

Then, are these, our rulers, so very much more intelligent than us? It was Huxley again who saw Indian psychology and physiology mirrored in the purplest advertisements of tonics and medicines. What would one think about the English if one were to find their characteristics in the "Daily Mirror" and other such popular papers? Advertisements apart, I am amazed at the prominence given by even some "sober" London papers to news of murder and scandal. In India murder cases are reported briefly and shoved into some obscure corner. In England it is difficult to open a popular daily without finding "MAN KILLS WIFE" in letters an inch high splashed across the page. As soon as they hear of a murder, the "human interest" sleuths get busy. With astonishing callousness they unearth all the details of the deceased's private life, photograph the "place where the body of Mrs X was found" and, if possible, commission the murderer to write his memoirs exclusively for their paper. News of divorces, assaults on women, high society romances gets similar treatment. There is no limit to the "enterprise" of news-

editors Not long ago one of them discovered that an Indian doctor who had killed his English wife had another wife living in Bombay Within a few minutes instructions had been cabled to the Bombay correspondent to interview the unfortunate woman At midnight a poor woman was dragged out of her bed, informed that her husband had committed a murder and asked to give a statement to the press' As I write this I have before me a copy of a very "sober" London daily On "Page Two" Mr Beverely Nichols makes a screaming protest against American methods of journalism and publicity On another page is a column-long interview with Mr Bernard Shaw giving details of 'one of his youthful love-affairs with a lady—who died the previous day' It is all grist to the mill of English journalism so long as a few more copies are sold

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Many people in India, I know, wonder why the daily, extra-political activities of prominent politicians are reported in the press What would they think if they saw the prominence given by English papers to sports and sportsmen? Idolization of sport is a British institution—like the Old Inn sign! In India we worship saints and sages There are countries where they canonize poets In England it is half-backs and century-making cricketers who are the idols of the public Here sport is no pastime It is an industry There are dividends involved in every goal that is scored and players are bought, sold and loaned just like stocks and shares Maybe the secret of Englishman's love of sport is not on the village green but in the vaults of Threadneedle Street

The way sportsmen are glorified here has a significant contrast in the treatment meted out to some of the

greatest English writers. Hardly any outstanding literary figure—from Shelley to D. H. Lawrence and Oscar Wilde—got a square deal in his own country and, even today, one has to go to Paris to see the play of Huxley's far from revolutionary novel, "Brave New World"

The great tradition of English freedom! I was specially asked to look for it on the soap-boxes in Hyde Park. Dutifully I went and listened to the half a dozen bedraggled orators preaching, respectively, Christianity, atheism, spiritualism, anti-feminism and socialism. None of them had an audience of more than twenty and one was desperately trying to have any audience at all. Hardly anyone paid an attention to what the speakers said, there were interruptions and jeering and constant chatter. The spectacle of free speech was not even amusing. I returned home to hear what the B. B. C. had to say about things and read in the evening paper what Lord Beaverbrook had decided I should read that evening!

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In front of the glittering facades of Regent Street squat the pavement-artists. They are often the subject of humorous comment in "Punch". I found nothing to laugh at them. Some of them are really good, their drawings are promising, if not perfect. Others are raw amateurs trying to earn a few pennies by displaying "All My Own Work". Not far away an unemployed musician is playing on the violin and collecting coppers from charitably inclined old ladies. An old woman, shivering in cold, is selling newspapers. An ex-soldier, crippled and in rags, offers you a box of matches and tells you how he

came to be wounded in the war and how much pension he gets It is all very disturbing, this mocking picture of English "prosperity" And it makes an Indian feel angry and bitter He even forgets the more acute poverty in his own country He is astonished to see that, even after exploiting him, his rulers can't provide food and shelter for their own people He gets a new angle on this empire business

But does the pavement-artist, the crippled ex-soldier, the slumdweller of East End or the Violinist begging for pennies understand the reality of this empire carried on in their name?

I am afraid they don't They are not allowed to Socialist, Labourite, Liberal or Conservative, the Englishmen I meet sooner or later produce a Union Jack to flaunt it in my face

But it would be wrong to believe that none of them are making any effort at all to understand the riddle of the empire, the empire which impoverishes India and yet can't reduce the number of unemployed in Britain Their number may not be much and I suspect that there are some Imperialist lions in sheeps' clothing but all the same it is encouraging to see them at all England has been successively enslaved by feudalism which still survives in the form of monarchy and titles, by Imperialism which perpetrated inequities all over the world in the name of England and by the new capitalist-imperialism which is even more subtle and dangerous It is not necessary for progressive Englishmen to work for Indian independence India will be free by her own efforts They should strive to make their own country, Britain free

Meanwhile, as I leave England, I no longer hate the English I am beginning to understand them I pity them

Earls Court,

London,

28th October, 1938

Book Four

OVERLAND TO INDIA

Paris (5th November) to Karachi (24th November)

"HEIL HITLER"

"What is Adolf Hitler to us?"

"A faith!"

"What else?"

"A last hope!"

"What else?"

"Our Leader"

—Catechism in a Nazi meeting as quoted
by E. A. Mowrer in "Germany Puts
The Clock Back".

"Heil Hitler!"

The gruff, guttural, voice jerked me out of the far from restful sleep, as I lay doubled up on a hard seat in a Third Class compartment on the Paris-Munich express

"Heil Hitler!"

As I opened my eyes I saw a typically Prussian uniformed officer saluting me with his arm held high. He had evidently been repeating the gesture for some time and his manner was clearly resentful of my un-German laziness. I had to say something to respond to the Nazi greeting. With mock seriousness I folded my hands and said, *Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai!*

The Officer saluted me again and said something in German which I did not understand but hearing the word "passport" mentioned I produced the document for examination. This was scrutinized with great care. Then, drawing upon his scanty English vocabulary, the Officer said, "Baggage", and was obviously surprised to find that I had nothing with me except a typewriter, a camera, a

blanket and a small suit case containing three shirts and the proverbial tooth brush Having decided (despite the warnings of friends who were afraid of the unstable international situation) to travel overland to India I had shipped all my cases to Bombay, keeping only the bare necessities with me

It was about midnight when we crossed into Hitler's Germany The train stopped for more than half an hour at the small frontier station while the Customs examination went on Not able to understand anything of what was talked around me except the repeated cries of "Heil Hitler" without which, it appears, no two Germans open their conversation, these two words will remain in my memory as my first and most dominant impression of Germany They are symbolic enough of the new Reich which is so manifestly overshadowed by the personality of the Fuehrer

We steamed into Munich railway station early in the morning There were flags and swastikas everywhere, uniformed figures flitted about in the ghostly semi-darkness while porters ran up and down the platform shouting "Munchen" That, of course, is the correct name of the town known as Munich in the English speaking world

"Heil Hitler' Fried eggs or poached eggs?", the waiter in the Railway Refreshment Room asked me in passable English after I had told him in atrocious German, "Ich Kawn nicht Deutch" (I don't know German) This was one of the few phrases I had learnt from the dictionary By the time I reach India I would be able to express my ignorance in six languages

Having fortified myself with breakfast, I sallied forth to have a glimpse of this city which has recently been so

much in the news, being the place where Chamberlain betrayed Czechoslovakia "Another Munich", indeed, has come to signify each fresh act of betrayal by the British Premier

I found the Catholic town asleep It was Sunday There was hardly any traffic even on the main roads and the big clean squares were deserted As I roamed aimlessly, however, I agreed with Moriz Carriere who said that, "A walk through Munich affords a picture of the architecture and art of 2000 years" The Rococo and the Renaissance styles are both to be seen while the new buildings conform to the modern geometrical and utilitarian architecture The frescoes and statues in the Odeon, enviable wealth of art, are visited by a diminishing number of local citizens who are otherwise kept preoccupied with parades and 'patriotic' celebrations all the year round Munich is full of old cathedrals, the most famous of which is Frauenkirche, built in Gothic style in the 14th century. There is a column in the centre of the square near it which commemorates the defeat of the Protestants at the hands of the Bavarian Catholics in 1638, reminding one of the time when Europe was torn by bloody conflict between the two warring sects of Christianity

Munich appeared to me as a town eminently fitted to be the home of a university, an art centre and an ideal place for intellectual and artistic pursuits It has the same air of peace and quiet dignity as Oxford and the peculiar mellowness that comes with age It seems to have a tradition of art awareness which is, so to say, writ large on the walls in the form of colourful murals and florid decorations

But from what I could see, not many people in Munich are today taking interest in such un-Nazi activities as Art.

Groups of uniformed Brown Shirts were collected in front of the railway station where a demonstration of model aeroplanes was being held to impress upon the people the might of the German Air Force. Everyone seemed to be 'Heil Hitlering' the other. Throughout the town, huge swastikas and banners with Nazi slogans were being put up in preparation for a commemoration parade to mark the anniversary of an abortive rising by Hitler and his comrades in 1923. While many of his followers had faced machine gun fire on that occasion the great Fuehrer had made himself scarce, to be arrested later and imprisoned. Munich was the scene of many of Hitler's early exploits and the town has thus acquired a special importance in the Nazi regime. Though the capital of the Reich continues to be Berlin, Munich is the veritable Headquarters of the Nazi Party and enjoys a special place in the favour of the Fuehrer. The Brown House—Number 45, Brienstrasse—is a model for the Nazi Party centres all over the country. I went and had a look at it. The House which was decorated according to the instructions of Hitler looks like a mansion, the only distinguishing features being a number of flags and tablets in memory of early Nazi "martyrs".

I went in a charabanc with a party of tourists to look at the Fuehrerhaus at Berchtesgaden, a pretty enough place nestling in the bosom of the hills, where Hitler spends much of his time, and where he and Chamberlain sat down together to dismember Czechoslovakia. Somehow the beauty of the surroundings throws into greater relief the dark menace of the plot that was hatched here!

Back in the city I had rather an unpleasant encounter with some Indian students whom I met in a most peculiar manner. While walking through the streets I saw a build-

ing that was obviously a Students' Hostel and went in just out of curiosity to find if there were any Indians there. Imagine my happiness when I found not one but several. But when they learnt that I belonged to an anti-Nazi paper like the "Chronicle", they appeared to have suddenly remembered "previous appointments". They asked me all manner of questions, submitting me to a ruthless cross-examination. "Have you got some documents to prove you are a journalist?", "Why does the 'Chronicle' write against the Nazis?", "Who is paying the expenses of your trip?" and "When are you leaving Munich?" After giving me a cup of coffee they left me sitting in the restaurant of their hostel and I had to ask some American boys who were most polite and friendly the way back to the station. Throughout my tour this was the solitary instance when I came across Indians who were not genuinely pleased to meet someone from their old country.

Among the boys I had met at the hostel and who were so anxious to get rid of me was also a young Indian artist who had told me he was holding an exhibition of his works in Gallerystrasse. Though he was not considerate enough to take me there I managed to find the place, paid my admission fee and was pleased to see that someone had been enterprising enough to come here all the way from India to show the Germans that we are not after all such utter barbarians as their Fuehrer makes us out to be in his "Mein Kampf". Indeed, I doubt if those boys who spoke to me so enthusiastically of the Nazis' friendly attitude towards India know what Hitler has written about "inferior races" like ours!

Towards the evening, to kill time, I again joined a charabanc party for a tour of the countryside. Leaving the city and the suburbs behind we were soon racing at

sixty miles an hour over a super-highway which is undoubtedly the best motor road I have seen anywhere in the world. It is scientifically planned to allow maximum traffic at the highest speed. The scenery on either side was exquisite, the Bavarian landscape providing a magnificent picture at sunset. Over gently sloped hills and through emerald green meadows, by the side of beautiful lakes, we sped in the exhilaratingly cool breeze of the evening. At an enchanting little inn on the shore of a lake we had an excellent tea and after a few minutes halt were on our way again. Coming back to the main highway, we raced along a mechanized column of the army—high-powered trucks, tanks, bullet-proof staff cars, and motor cycles ridden by steel-helmeted soldiers. The military significance of these *Autobahns*, the German name for this road system, was suddenly revealed to me. The purpose of spending millions over them was not to provide facilities to tourists to look at scenery but to transport vast sections of mechanized army across the continent in the shortest possible time. While we took a horse-shoe turning to retrace our steps, the army column went straight ahead on the road, which, I learnt, led to Vienna!

IN NAZI VIENNA

"I have shown through my life that I can do more than these dwarfs, who ruled this country into ruin. My name will stand as the name of the great son of this country."

—Adolf Hitler.

Travelling by night again, I reached Vienna in the morning. I believe we crossed what was a few months ago the Austrian frontier at about midnight but the train did not stop for passport or Customs examination. That is *Anschluss*! But an Austrian fellow-passenger was visibly moved when he pointed out to me the former frontier station as we went thundering by.

Tourist literature invariably glamourizes old cities, particularly if they have had monarchical associations. What have we not been told about Vienna? Vienna the Beautiful. Vienna the Magnificent. Gay Vienna. Romantic Vienna. The latest edition of the Hapsburgs' city that I saw is none of these things. It is Nazi Vienna.

I have never been in a city held by an army of occupation. But it cannot be very different from the Vienna that I saw. From the moment that you step down from the train you are aware of the presence of foreign troops. Bullet-headed Prussian officers, swaggering young Nazi storm-troopers, goose-stepping squadrons of German soldiers, march triumphantly along the streets of Vienna. 'Conquerors'!

Hollywood films have made us familiar with a Vienna which has been long since dead, which perhaps never existed outside the imagination of scenarists,—the Vienna of dreaming waltzes, doll-like women in huge crinolines.

and chocolate-cream Archdukes In any case I was never prepared for the unspeakable shabbiness of *Westbahnhof*, the station where our train stopped, the dingy appearance of the Refreshment Room where I had coffee and stale rolls and the utterly miserable condition of the taxi-drivers who pounce upon a traveller like a pack of hungry wolves

Ever since Hitler's armies marched into his original home country, the tourist traffic which had been the source of considerable prosperity in Vienna has dwindled, so that now the arrival of a foreign visitor is almost a rare event No wonder the taxi-drivers were so excited when I appeared and the one who finally succeeded in capturing me and my modest luggage was evidently anxious to make me pay for Hitler's crime And, but for the fact that I drove straight to the American Express office, I might have had to pawn my typewriter to pay the exorbitant amount demanded by the gentleman at the wheel of the ancient Daimler

My knowledge of Economics is worse than my Mathematics But even I could sense something wrong with the currency policy of the *Reich* when, instead of the 20 Reichmarks that I had got for an English pound in Paris, I got only eleven in Vienna It was explained to me that the rate I had got in Paris was only meant for tourists, to induce them to come to Germany, and that a different rate operated within the country The failure of the economic policy of the Nazis is thus publicly advertised in the offices of every tourist agency all over the world!

Pondering over the intricacies of ratio and exchange, I joined an American Express excursion party to go round the city Starting from the ornate Opera House, along Ringstrasse and Kartnerstrasse we "did" the fashionable

part of the city, then went through a labyrinth of narrower roads and side streets, crowded and often shabby, and finally arrived at the old Hapsburg palaces. Having plenty of magnificent ruins in our own country I was not much impressed by these decaying monuments of an obsolete empire. But I liked the fine big public buildings—theatres, museums, libraries and colleges—which have all been built on a generous scale worthy of a noble city. Above all I admired the wonderful blocks of flats that were built for the workers by the Socialist municipal administration of Vienna in the pre-Schusnigg years.

The conducted excursion over, I decided to explore the city on my own. The first thing that I noticed was the beauty of the trees that line either side of the big boulevards. Autumn had turned the leaves the colour of copper and already they had begun to fall in golden heaps all over the pavements. Under the afternoon sun the shadows of the trees cut beautiful patterns on the ground, fluid and variable like reflections in water. All important public buildings in Vienna seem to have parks surrounding them with fine old trees harmonizing with the age-worn piles of stone and flower-beds lending colour to an otherwise grey background. We will miss a great deal of beauty and grace in our lives if our cities of the future are to be devoid of trees and parks and lawns and become mere jungles of steel and cement, like New York!

Having had a sore experience of a taxi and with plenty of time on my hands I took a carriage, rather a rickety affair driven by a hungry-looking horse, very much like a Bombay Victoria. With the help of the dictionary I explained to the driver that I wanted to drive to the Woods. The celebrated Vienna Woods. At least they are as beautiful as depicted in "The Great Waltz", or perhaps more,

for no movie camera can adequately reproduce the play of light and shade and the serene beauty of this place

But Vienna is not all woods And when I returned to resume my wanderings in the city I was witness to far less pleasant phenomena I was standing in front of the statue of Goethe, adjusting my camera to take a photograph, when I saw a dark-haired old woman looking furtively about and then guiltily sitting down on one of the many benches lying on the pavement Hardly a minute had passed than I saw a Nazi police official, with a swastika on his armlet, approaching and roughly removing her from the bench The woman who was in threadbare clothes and was obviously weary with walking did not utter a single word of protest and trudged away

It was later that I got to know the significance of this incident The benches lying by the roadside for the convenience of pedestrians bear a notice painted in big white letters to the effect that they can be used only by Aryans Not by Jews—not even by weary old Jewish women! Those who come to India to investigate the “horrors” of the caste system, a system that no intelligent Indian supports today and which is fast crumbling, should better visit Hitlerland and see the world’s worst form of “Untouchability” in practice

The true extent of the race-phobia that is being disseminated by the Nazis became apparent to me more in Vienna than in Munich which is traditionally a Catholic city with perhaps a small Jewish population Also, having been in force for some years already, the anti-Jewish edicts of Hitler have already had their effect in German towns while in Vienna the “pogrom” has just been started in a most virulent form I found all Jewish shops bearing huge posters asking the citizens to boycott them complete-

ly I roused the ire of many a Vienna Nazi that day by ostentatiously walking into every such shop that came my way. And when once a storm-trooper remonstrated with me for taking coffee in a restaurant owned by a Jew, I repeated the convenient formula, *Ich Kawn nicht Deutsch* (I can't speak German)

On practically every book-stall and news-stand I saw that anti-Jewish literature was being sold Books, pamphlets, pictures and cartoons Some of this stuff which depicts the Jewish character in a most hideously ugly light is so revolting that I wonder how any civilized person can tolerate to look at such things According to this propaganda, the Jews have a monopoly of the worst racial characteristics in the world and that every evil, from communism to cancer, can be traced to them!

The Jews are not the only people suffering in Vienna since the mock *Anschluss* brought a free Austria by force under the iron heel of Hitler The concentration camps are full of socialists, trade unionists, radicals and intellectuals, priests and independent politicians The rate of "suicides" in the city has been going up alarmingly Characteristically enough while German capitalists have promptly grabbed all the choicest plums of Austrian industries, the workers of Vienna have to be content with lower wages, longer hours of work and higher cost of living

A couple of students who knew English and whom I happened to meet in a cafe told me in hushed whispers of the awful fate of their city since the *Anchluss* "Ours was the city," one of them said, "that gave asylum to revolutionary intellectuals from all over the world and yet to-day we must ourselves seek refuge in some alien land" I asked them about the prospects of the Nazification of Aus-

tria to the extent of the country losing its individuality completely and the young man with keen fiery eyes replied, "Austria was never Germany and shall never be "

Good-bye, Vienna I may come again but not so long as you deny non-Aryan old women the right to sit on your park benches!

THE BLUE DANUBE

"Germany already controls the Danube up to the Hungarian frontier Beyond lie the fertile plains of Hungary, a rich granary of food And beyond that the coveted oil-wells of Rumania."

—F. Elwyn Jones.

The Blue Danube is not blue at all From the Ferenc-Jozef bridge I saw it as a dirty, grey, sluggish stream full of steamers and boats At night, however, when the lights of Budapest are reflected in its dark depths and even ugly freighters assume the aspect of fairyland argosies, the famous river does become an incentive to romance and an inspiration to composers of rhapsodies

Like all cities which have a reputation for their beauty and 'glamorous' atmosphere, Budapest can be looked at from two points-of-view—the realistic and the romantic

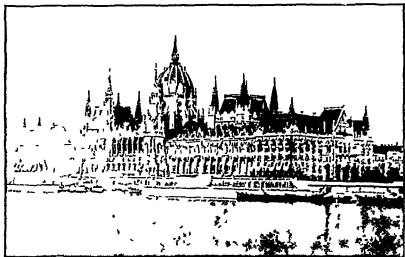
Having slept in a soft bed in the best hotel in town, after several sleepless nights in train, I came out to investigate Budapest on my own, armed with a map The first thing that struck me was the shabbiness of most of the people in the streets The contrast between the fine clothes of the local gentry I had seen at breakfast in the hotel and the dirty rags of the peasants in the nearby vegetable market was too glaring to be missed Hungary is a country (like India) of landlords and landless peasants, of feudal luxury and appalling poverty

The next thing I noticed was the name of a street—Mussolini Utca! Fascist (as well as Nazi) papers were on sale on many news-stands For many years Hungary (which with its anti-Socialist White Terror of 1919-21 gave

Europe the first taste of Fascist atrocities) was under the influence of Italy. Even today Fascist agents are busy in the country and have bought the support of some parties. But of late the country has been the object of special attention of the Nazi propagandists whose influence has vastly increased with the disappearance of Austria. Economically, Hungary is already within the German sphere of influence, fifty per cent of the import as well as export trade being with Germany.

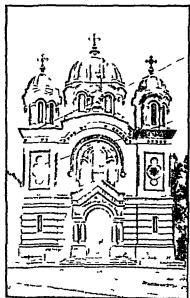
Another factor has helped to consolidate German influence in Hungary. The day I arrived in Budapest, the whole country was celebrating the return of territory which, by treaty of Versailles, had been incorporated in Czechoslovakia. The jingoes and super-patriots have always played upon the Hungarians' sense of indignation caused by the loss of practically half of their empire. Patriotism was once again being inflamed to white heat to celebrate the return of at least a part of the lost empire. As I watched the big military parade held at the War Memorial in this connection I could see how they must feel thankful to Hitler for having caused the return of this territory by the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. Also I could not help noticing that the military equipment of the army on parade was almost exclusively of German manufacture. In return for Hungarian grain Hitler has been arming a likely ally!

While there are a number of Nazi and near-Nazi groups in Hungary, mostly financed with German funds, and Regent Horthy himself is no friend of democracy, the country may yet be saved from completely identifying itself with the Axis. I talked to several people in Budapest and discovered that actually neither Germany nor Italy is very popular among the bulk of the people, even the



BUDAPEST

Parliament House on the bank of the Blue Danube



BUCHAREST

Church of St Nicholas



VIENNA

The Rathaus

fascist-minded ruling class being afraid of the expansionist dreams of Hitler. The danger, however, lies in the economic dependence of an agricultural country like Hungary on Germany and in the Nazi ideology penetrating the masses through the guise of anti-semitism and patriotism.

I saw the other side of Budapest also. With Kabos, the great Hungarian film star to whom I had brought a letter of introduction from his son in London, I drove round the city which, in many respects, is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. We saw the fine Parliament house on the river, far more impressive than Westminster in London, drove out of the city through avenues of magnificent old trees and visited some film studios which did not strike me as being very much better than those we have in India. In the evening I roamed about the famous 'Zoo in Budapest' with its vast grounds and amazing collection of animals from all over the world. It certainly is the romantic place that it is reputed to be.

I drove out into the country and saw grand old chalets standing gaunt against the sweeping landscape. These are the homes of the feudal aristocracy of Hungary, a few thousand of whom own more than half the land in the country. Besides them I also saw the poor little huts of the peasants but in that sunset panorama even they looked picturesque!

In the crowded streets and squares of Budapest it was interesting to see the colourful atmosphere that is generally associated with Oriental countries. Even the national dress of the people is more akin, in colour and form, to the costumes of Asia than the drab stereotyped clothes of western Europe. Peasant women in flowery dresses may be seen bringing vegetable baskets on their heads to the market,

as they do in a hill town in India. Even in its spicy, delectable food, Hungary has the flavour of the Orient.

At night the city is aflame with myriads of lights. I have seldom seen a city with so many electric signs as Budapest. A magnificent view may be had from one of the bridges that span the Blue Danube (simply known as Duna locally), and romantic couples may be seen walking along the avenues on either side of the river.

Back at the hotel, I dine in a huge gilded Dining Room with old fashioned mirrors on the walls. Reminds me of a 'set' in some old movie. Among those present are Hungarian nobles, English commercial travellers, American tourists and quite a few uniformed army officers. As I diffidently enter the place, terribly conscious of my far from presentable clothes, I am embarrassed by the courtly bow of the Head Waiter who conducts me to a small table for two very near the orchestra. I am soon joined by a young Hungarian lady whom I had met on the train and who had agreed to keep me company at dinner. That saves me from the necessity of telling every waiter, *Nef Beszel Magyarul* (I don't know Hungarian). The orchestra strikes a lively tune and we start eating.

After the overture I notice the orchestra conductor bowing to me in a rather peculiar manner. Soon he comes up to me and asks "*Bezel Angolul?*" (Do you speak English?) He then tells me that he has been in India where he played at the leading hotels of Calcutta and Bombay. I mutter something about the world being a small place, after all. Evidently he has a soft corner for India and tells me he would like to play something specially for me. This puts me in a terribly awkward position as my knowledge of European music is almost as scanty as my know-

ledge of the Hungarian language. I look at my companion for help but she only smiles, obviously enjoying my predicament. Then I get a brain-wave and blurt out, "The Blue Danube". The kindly musician retires to his platform and with a gentle movement of his wand fills the room with the languorous rhythm of the famous Hungarian rhapsody, sinuous and plaintive like the Blue Danube itself

AHEAD OF HITLER

"Millions of lei have been spent by the Nazis on Rumania in the last three years. They have founded hundreds of newspapers. They have supplied terrorist organizations with weapons. It is not only gold that has come from Germany, but machine guns and hand grenades for the terrorists. For Germany can wait no longer. It needs our petrol."

—Dr. Lupu, Vice-President of Rumanian National Peasant Party in 1937.

Miles upon miles of corn fields, instinctively reminding one of the rolling plains of the Panjab, greet the traveller as the Budapest-Bucharest express crosses the frontier. Poor shabbily clad peasants may be seen patiently walking behind old-fashioned horse-driven ploughs. You see them at the railway stations in quaint dresses which would be picturesque if they were not so dirty. Children shivering in the cold Balkan air sell you apples that are sour but nevertheless cheap. The poverty-stricken, easy-going, rural atmosphere is more of the agricultural countries of Asia than of the industrialized Europe.

This is Rumania, the country that threatens to become the cock-pit of Europe in the event of another Great War. It might suffer the fate of Belgium in 1914. Indeed, for an army of aggression Rumania is not only a means to an end, a passage like Belgium, but an end in itself.

I am travelling ahead of Hitler. This is the route he is likely to follow to fulfil the Berlin-Baghdad dream.

Those corn fields one saw from the train would be one of the causes of Rumania being involved in a war. But a

bigger *causus belli* would be those huge oil wells which lie almost hidden by the surrounding crop of wheat. From the train one can just see in the distance their mast-like derricks rising towards the sky. There is far too much oil in Rumania. There are practical difficulties in the way of exporting large quantities of it abroad in competition with existing monopolies and the surplus may sometimes be seen flooding the ground near a well, like water in a rice field! This surfeit of oil may possibly cause an international conflagration. Hitler needs for his country the Rumanian wheat and Rumanian oil as well as the abundant crops of the Ukraine that lie beyond. And, unless he is checked by a concert of the democracies, the Nazi Fuehrer seems determined to follow his conquest of Czechoslovakia and the consequent domination over Hungary with the annexation—open or, may be, slightly veiled and indirect—of Rumania.

Rumania, more than any other country of Eastern Europe created or enlarged on the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, presents ethnological features which are puzzling in their complex variety. The Rumanians claim to be descendants of the Roman colonists who under Trajan conquered this territory in 101 A.D. but manifestly all the Rumanians today are not the descendants of the Roman settlers. Successive waves of invasion from the East and the West have left behind a strange conglomeration of races and religions. In a population of over 19 million there are 13 million Rumanians, 1,500,000 Magyars, 750,000 Germans and the remainder of the population consists of Russians, Ruthenians, Bulgarians, Turks and Gypsies. I was surprised to hear Arabic words like *Hammal* (Porter) and *Baksheesh* (Tip) in Bucharest and Constanta but they recall the days when the Ottoman Turks were masters of Eastern Europe.

Denominationally, most of them belong to the Orthodox Church of Rumania but there are also Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Reformists, Lutherans, Unitarians, Muslims and other minor sects too numerous to mention. There are about a million Jews.

In a country with such a heterogeneous population, it is no wonder that a stable government cannot easily be established. Indeed, for a considerable time Rumania has been the happy hunting ground of corrupt politicians and adventurers, fattening upon the mass of ignorant, fatalistic peasantry. After the war when the country acquired considerable new territory there was a land reform and agriculture thrived for some time but due to a lack of any marketing organization the peasants could not sell the glut of grain their land produced. Agrarian bankruptcy was the natural result and it is only because the Rumanians are by nature placid and easy-going folk that the country was saved from a revolution.

Like most other Balkan countries, Rumanian politics have been mixed with palace intrigues, complicated by royal romances. Carol, the heir-apparent, who was a wilful and headstrong young man, had to leave the country and go into exile in 1922, as a result of his love affair with Madame Lupescu. The country was actually governed by a semi-dictator, Bratianu, and when in 1927 Carol's father, Ferdinand, died Bratianu put on the throne Michael, the six-year-old son of Carol. Three years later, however, on the death of Bratianu the power passed into the hands of a patriotic peasant chieftain who became Prime Minister and sent an invitation to Carol to return. The exiled Prince flew to Bucharest and occupied the throne which had already been held by his son. With him came Madame Lupescu who, as the King's favourite, has since occupied

a position of considerable political influence "in the grand line of Du Barry and De Pompadour" As the head of the palace *camarilla*, her presence is resented by the old princely families, by the politicians and, because she is a Jew, by the large mass of anti-semitics including the fascists of the Iron Guard

The Iron Guard is forbidden as a political party but it still functions and an acquaintance pointed out to me some of its leaders grouped together in the lobby of the leading hotel in Bucharest Anti-Semitism has, of course, been a sheet-anchor of the Iron Guard policy and has now crystallised into a bitter hostility to the Jewish Madame Lupescu Their programme, modelled more on the lines of Hitler than Mussolini, includes the elimination of political parties though they propose to leave the King alone—if he gives up his mistress! More important, however, is the Iron Guard plan to swing Rumania from her traditional friendship with France to an alliance with Hitler, possibly an extension of the Rome-Berlin axis to Bucharest Such a possibility gains added significance from the fact that across Rumania lies USSR, the "enemy" against whom Hitler is preparing to strike A Nazified Rumania would immediately facilitate the Fuehrer's plans in Eastern Europe It is with this end that the Nazis have spent millions of lei in Rumania during the last few years. They have founded newspapers, supplied the terrorist organizations with arms and otherwise abetted the Iron Guard in a variety of ways

The Rumanian government, in fact, was itself responsible for the growing menace of the Iron Guard For several years the organization was tolerated until the police discovered a plot for the violent overthrow of the government last year and the Guard had to be declared illegal

Indeed, Rumania is ruled to-day under a dictatorial constitution, the democratic parliamentary system having been abolished. The political parties have been dissolved and the King holds supreme power. Thus it is clear that it is not for any ideological reasons that Carol to-day seeks the protection of the democracies. For several years he has been playing a sort of "I love you, I love you not" game alternately with Great Britain and Germany which was one of the most perplexing factors in Balkan politics.

The reason is to be found in the economic needs of Rumania. She wants an outlet for her oil resources (one third of which are owned by British companies) which cannot be sold in the world market, firstly because of competition from the existing international oil monopolies and, secondly because of the difficulty of transporting it cheaply over great distances. Then, again, Roumania's chief crop is grain, very little of which can be sold to the countries of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente. Germany alone can buy all the oil and all the grain. But Hitler's trade alliances are the pawns in his game of expansion and if he agrees to relieve Rumania of her oil and wheat it will only be for a political price.

I found Bucharest seething with political complications. There are, it was evident, currents and cross-currents of diplomacy, intrigue and agitation. Smart military officials in gay musical-comedy uniforms, providing a contrast with the stark poverty and shabbiness of the common folk, went about with a pronounced swagger. Ministers and officials of the State flitted in and out of the Royal Palace with important-looking portfolios under their arms. In hotels and restaurants the only topic of discussion was the critical European situation. There were rumours of King Carol's impending visit to Britain, to negotiate an

alliance with the "democracies", counter rumours that he was to visit not London but Berlin and that in the event of a war Rumania would throw in her weight with the totalitarian states

Bucharest has been called "Little Paris" (though a French wit once remarked that he hoped Paris would not be slandered with the title, "Big Bucharest") I do not know how the capital of Rumania came to adopt this title. It is an undistinguished town with hardly any cultural pretensions, not very clean, with only a small business and fashionable quarter built on modern lines. The glittering shop fronts of Calea Victoria, displaying the latest fashions imported from Paris, only serve to emphasize the ugliness and destitution of the rest of the town parts of which are among the worst slums I have seen anywhere in the world. On the whole, Bucharest is the typical capital of an impoverished country saddled with a pleasure-loving ruling class.

But in one respect it is certainly the Paris of the Balkans. Just as the French capital is the melting pot of politics in Western Europe, Bucharest holds the same position in the east. The rulers being definitely opportunists, there is a manifest tug-of-war between the bigger powers for their favours. Nazis and Fascists are both active, emissaries from other Balkan countries keep on coming here to consult King Carol, while the mighty neighbour, USSR, keeps a vigilant eye on the course of events here. The grain and oil of Rumania attract the attention of capitalists and diplomats even from far off countries.

And across the dark waters of the Black Sea lies Turkey. From there, a few hours before I left Bucharest, came news that startled and upset every Balkan country,

and left the political busy-bodies in Bucharest agitatedly guessing the likely repercussions on the Balance of Power in Eastern Europe. I hastened to catch the boat from Constanta to Istanbul.

WHEN TURKEY MOURNED

"I will lead my people by the hand along the road until their feet are sure and they know the way Then they may choose for themselves. Then my work will be done."

—Kamal Ataturk

Europe on one side, Asia on the other, Golden Horn lay under a pall of dark grey clouds as the steamer from Constanta slowly made its way towards the harbour We passed a man-of-war lying at anchor Another lay a mile to the North while two cruisers could be seen in the distance patrolling the straits The Daradanelles are not to be left defenceless There shall not be another Gallipoli !

The outline of the city was now clearly visible Every flag in Istanbul and on the ships that we passed was half-mast Turkey mourned the death of her hero, the architect of her present greatness Kamal Ataturk was dead !

I remained in Turkey for about a week All this time the nation was in mourning Not the formal State mourning of half-mast flags and closed show places, but the spontaneous and heart-felt mourning shared by an entire people each of whom seemed to feel it as a personal tragedy. Characteristic of the prevailing sense of sorrow was the remark of an Istanbul school-girl who said to me, "I am sorry you have come to our country at a time when I am mourning the death of my father" *My father! Our father!* That is the way I found Turks talking about the man who was no more I wonder if many other rulers and dictators have enjoyed such deep affection of the vast mass of their people

Ataturk—Father of the Turks ! That is what he was Out of the debris of a crumbling, degenerate empire, he

built the strong edifice of a modern state. He substituted knowledge for ignorance, reason for superstition, industrial self-sufficiency for economic servility. The magnitude of the changes that he introduced in the country is difficult to comprehend from the outside. In Turkey, however, at every step one finds evidence of progress—political, social and industrial progress. And everything that is modern and progressive bears the unmistakable impress of the genius that was Kamal.

Nothing shows to a foreign tourist, in more marked a manner, the extent of the amazing transformation that Kamal brought about in Turkey during the last twenty years than the contrast between Istanbul and Ankara. The transfer of the capital is almost symbolic. While the memories of the easy-going days of the Ottoman Caliphate and the earlier era of Byzantine pomp and pageantry still haunt the narrow, cobbled alleys of Istanbul, the new city of Ankara has a fresh business-like appearance, humming with activity and all the time manifestly growing.

Istanbul—*nee* Constantinople—is an old city, in form and colour definitely of the east. Seen from the boat, as one enters the magnificent harbour appropriately called the Golden Horn, the straggling city makes an impressive picture even though some, with fantastic Arabian Nights illusions, may not find it so picturesque as they had imagined. The mass of the city rises out of the blue-green Sea of Marmora and is crowned with noble Byzantine domes and slim cylindrical minarets of its many mosques. Enthroned, like Rome, upon seven hills, Istanbul extends for miles, the last outlying suburbs merging into the horizon.

Limitless age is stamped upon this city which, in respect of influence over the course of human affairs, has per-

haps only three rivals in the western world—Athens, Rome and Jerusalem. Situated where Europe and Asia are joined, it has truly been at the cross-roads of history. In the strange conglomeration of its churches and mosques, palaces and ruins, are to be found the relics of two of the greatest empires in world history. The changes in its name are significant testimony to the epic transformation it has seen—Byzantium, Constantinople, Istanbul!

Founded by Constantine the Great through the enlargement of the old town of Byzantium, a natural citadel, almost impregnable against attack from land or water, it was the ideal capital of a great empire. The churches and monasteries (many of which had been converted into mosques by the Ottomans but have been restored now by the new secular Government) remind one of the days when Constantinople was the centre of the Eastern Church and one of the holy cities of Christendom, often called New Rome. Indeed, the Chief Patriarch of the Greek Church still signs himself "Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome."

Among these churches, the most famous is St Sophia, the glory of Byzantine Art and one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. The story of this church is closely linked with the changing destiny of Turkey.

Built by the Justinians in 532 A.D., it was for long one of the holiest shrines of the Christian world and pilgrims would come to pray here from distant countries. After the Turkish conquest a minaret was erected at each of the four exterior angles of the building and the interior turned into a mosque by concealing the mosaics which adorned the walls. In 1847 A.D. the building was thoroughly repaired by the orders of the then Sultan, Abdul Majid, who allow-

ed the mosaic figures to be restored and covered with matting before being plastered over. "They may reappear", noted a European writer a few decades ago, "in the changes which the future will bring" And, sure enough, to-day the splendid murals and mosaic work on the walls of St. Sophia is revealed in all its glory, thanks to the late Kamal Atatürk who ordered the restoration of the interior of the building to its original state Its status to-day is neither that of a church nor that of a mosque but it is a work of art to be preserved as such

Seen from the outside, St Sophia appears an architectural paradox The four cylindrical minarets are in strange contrast with the flat Byzantine semi-dome Within, however, it is undoubtedly one of the finest creations of art It is a stately edifice, huge but proportionate, with all the grand features of basilica architecture The mosaics on the walls are gems of diligent craftsmanship, still retaining the warmth of their colours which seem to brighten the semi-darkness of the hallowed precincts

Even the grand mosques of which there are many, as each Ottoman Sultan built one after his own name, have a Byzantine touch in their otherwise Saracenic architecture There is a mosque on the crest of each hill, so that they stand out prominently in any general view of the city The Ottoman architects have made a skilful use of the Byzantine semi-dome in the support of the main Saracenic dome and in some cases the main dome rests upon four semi-domes

A glimpse of mediaeval Turkey may be had in the old Bazar with its labyrinth of dark alleys—all covered up as a safeguard against the intense cold of a Turkish winter—which extend, in a zig zag and circular fashion, for almost

a mile Here, in dusty little shops, may be had the rarest souvenirs of the Turkey that was—Byzantine paintings and ikons, illuminated manuscripts of the Holy Quran, Ottoman Swords and exquisite old silver ware

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There is little of this mediaeval atmosphere in the new capital of Turkey After a night journey from Istanbul, across a rugged countryside, Ankara is reached in the morning The railway station provides the first pleasant shock one receives Stepping into the spacious waiting hall—all marble and chromium—one may well wonder if this is not one of the most modern railway stations in the world The severely modernistic, perfectly planned and spotlessly clean building is only a prelude to the story of Ankara—a town of strictly utilitarian but dignified architecture, a town which, in its manifold activities, is fully representative of the dynamic new Turkey There is a sense of wonder and expectancy as one drives towards the city over a fine road flanked by rows of young trees, by themselves a miracle in this Anatolian waste

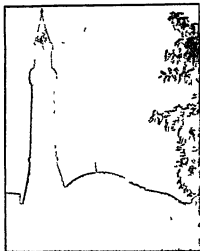
Many had shaken their heads sceptically when, among the very first decrees he issued as President of the Republic, the late Kamal Ataturk announced his intention to remove the capital from Istanbul There were solid reasons behind this resolve Ankara was in the geographical centre of the country and could be made the junction of a network of railways, linking the capital with every part of the country Above all, it was free from that subtle insidious influence of conservatism and court intrigue that still permeated the life of Istanbul The revolutionary new Turkey must have a new capital and the man who led his people to victory in the face of overwhelming odds also knew how to overcome practical difficulties in the way of

building a modern city on a sort of a swampy oasis in the midst of barren, waterless countryside

And yet Ankara is not entirely a new habitation. The population of about 20,000 which has lived in a picturesque but ancient town on the hill has strong historic roots. The new town which has a population of nearly two lakhs is independent of, but not divorced from, the old one. The two parts are, indeed, interlocked with each other so that while the ages-old, narrow, cobbled alley-ways persist in the old town they are to-day electrically lit and many of the houses with their fine old wood carvings are equipped with telephones.

The new Ankara, linked with the old town at one end, extends far into the Anatolian waste so that there is no cramping for space. Broad avenues with young trees, defying the rigours of the treacherous climate lead one from the business and residential quarter to the Government Secretariat and Parliament building on the one side, the Race Course and the Railway Station on the other. The buildings, of reinforced concrete with a lavish use of glass, tiles, woods and marble, mostly follow the cubic forms of neo-German architecture with only occasional intrusion of the Saracenic arches or the Turkish dome. Besides the main block of Government buildings which are still receiving the finishing touches, notable buildings include the "Halk Evi" (People's House For Culture and Recreation), the Archaeological Museum, the Music Hall and the Industrial Exhibition Building.

Not even excepting Washington, Ankara is the only capital in the world, planned with such thoroughness. Adjoining the Secretariat is the Diplomatic quarter where are housed all the embassies, each with a

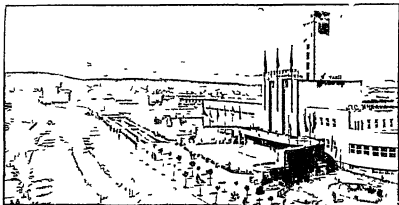


St Sophia

TURKEY **Yesterday and To-day'**



Young Turkey Shows the way



Modern Ankara



Mechanized Turkish Army

teristic national touch about it. Crowning this noble pile of buildings is the spacious residence of the President, designed and furnished for a man of distinction, commanding a magnificent view of Ankara, from where the late Atatürk saw his dream city rise out of the wilderness.

Life in Ankara is as modern as are the buildings. There are luxurious hotels, restaurants, theatres, cinemas and music halls, night clubs and well-equipped shops. Young Turks—men and women—move about with a newly-acquired dignity and freedom, proud of their city and their country and, above all, proud of the saviour and maker of their nation, Kamal Atatürk, who is no more amidst them, but whose personality still inspires them even as his equestrian statue dominates the town, from its high pedestal, transfixed in a defiant gesture—challenging the clouds!

* * * *

From the days of the Khilafat agitation when Indian nationalists made the cause of Turkey their own, a close link has existed between the two countries. I still remember how as a child I used to be intrigued by curious foreign names like Constantinople, Gallipoli, Enver Pasha, Kemal Pasha etc. being frequently used in public meetings and newspapers at that time.

The memory of those days was revived by a strange encounter I had in Istanbul when, together with a group of Chinese Muslim youths who were touring the Islamic countries to rouse sympathy for China, I happened to visit St. Sophia.

In front of the monument we were met by a group of interpreter—guides who, noticing that we were foreigners, summoned us offering their services in various lan-

guages Among them, they seemed to be able to speak every language under the sun—English, French, German, Persian, Arabic, Russian Just by way of mystifying them with a language that, I was sure, none of them understood I said, "*Kaho, Bhai, Koi Hindustani Bhi Janta Hai?*" (Say, brother, does anyone of you know Hindustani ?)

Imagine my surprise when a shrivelled little man of over fifty disentangled himself from the crowd and, greeting me in fluent Hindustani, embraced me like a long-lost brother

Within a few minutes, he was entertaining us in a nearby cafe It was then that he told me how he happened to be in Istanbul His accent bore the peculiar impress of Bhendi Bazar and, on being questioned, he said that he had lived for many years in Abdul Rehman Street in Bombay It was during the Balkan war that Mahmud (that is his name) took it into his head to leave India and join the Turkish army Travelling was not easy at that time and it was after many adventures that Mahmud reached Turkey by the overland route, through Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq He not only fought in the Balkan War but also in the Great War and recalls with pride serving under the late Kamal His life ambition—to be the citizen of a free country—has now been fulfilled Legally, he is a Turk to-day And yet as he talked to me excitedly about Indian politics, the development of our struggle for freedom and the changing social conditions, I knew that in the heart of this man there is still a place that will be for ever India

* * * *

About modern Turkey there are a great number of legends current in India It is sometime said that Islam has been banished from the country, that nobody is allowed

to pray, that mosques have been turned into museums and that no woman may appear in public with a veil I cannot pretend to have become an authority on Turkey during my few days' stay but I may note down here some of my own observations

The Arabic script seems to have been completely abolished in Turkey Everything is written phonetically in the Latin script, thus following neither English nor French mode of spelling Thus it is "Jorj" instead of "George" and "Amerikan Ekspres Ko, Ink" instead of "American Express Co, Inc" To one from India, it comes as a surprise to see that even notices in mosques, announcing prayer timings, and inscriptions on tomb-stones are written in the Latin script

In the grand empty hall of St Sophia I saw placed in a corner a big round board with the word "ALLAH" inscribed on it in the Arabic script Originally it was fixed in a conspicuous place on the wall "Allah In A Corner" may strike some as an opposite description of this alleged godless country But there are no restrictions on Islam—or, for that matter, on any religion—in Turkey Secularization of the state is often confused with irreligiousness I found thousands of people offering prayers in the mosques of Istanbul without any hindrance The prayers (as distinguished from the *Khutba* or sermon) are recited in Arabic as usual Invariably people—including women—pray in their ordinary western clothes The *pesh Imam* who leads the prayers is usually clad in his traditional flowing robes but he is not allowed to appear in this dress in public as in old days there were cases when priests exploited their distinctive position The ban on priestly robes also extends to Christians and Jews I was in Turkey during the month of *Ramazan* and I found many people keeping fast But

there is no compulsory closing of food shops during this month

The modern Turkish woman is a marvel. She is as free as her western sister and enjoys greater civic and political rights than the women in many European countries. She may receive education in any institution and aspire to any public office. She is to be seen in law courts, in newspaper offices, in the Parliament. It is difficult to imagine that her freedom is only twenty years old.

No Turk is allowed to keep his wife or other women of his household in purdah by force. The power of the State has certainly been used to abolish seclusion of women. But legally there is no compulsion to discard the veil. I have myself seen old ladies, wrapped up in the traditional black veil, moving about in the narrow streets of Istanbul, like shadows out of the past. Their number is not large and in a modern city like Ankara they are not to be seen at all, but their existence does prove that not legal compulsion but emancipated public opinion is responsible for the abolition of purdah in Turkey.

But the most wonderful thing in Turkey is the Turkish school child. Bright, eager and flushed with the hopeful enthusiasm of their generation, it is a pleasure to see them going in disciplined crowds to schools. Not only is primary education free and compulsory but school uniforms and texts books, etc. are also provided free to poor children. No longer is modern education restricted to big cities. It has penetrated into the remotest village. When our train, after several hours journey from Ankara, stopped at a small station on the Turkish-Syrian border, the only prominent building I could see amidst the cluster of huts was the school. A woman teacher brought them out to have a

WHEN TURKEY MOURNED

look at the train and explained to them the mechanism of the locomotive From the eager look on their faces I imagined she then told them of the countries to which this train was travelling, firing their imagination with visions of far off places As the train steamed out, the children waved to us a cheery farewell That was my last glimpse of Turkey It would be wonderful to come back to this country of great promise after fifteen years when this generation of school-children has grown into manhood

TAURUS EXPRESS

Having dealt almost exclusively with prosaic topics so far (as a friend who has read the earlier chapters complains), it seems proper at this stage to introduce the romantic element in this story of my travels. And thus I propose to set down what may be called the Strange Episode Of The Turkish Girl Who Said To Me "I Love You" !

It happened on the Taurus Express, which is such a mighty link in the overland route from Europe to Asia. The train starts from Hyderpasha, Istanbul's railway terminus on the Asiatic mainland, where it connects with the Simplon-Orient Express from Paris which stops on the other side of the narrow strip of sea.

I boarded the Express at Ankara. In the same compartment were a Turkish boy and girl, brother and sister evidently, who were good enough to give me a seat. The train having started, some conversation was indicated. Knowing that most of the educated Turks know French I let go one of the very few French phrases I had picked up in Paris "*Par les vous Anglaise?*" (Do you speak English?) To which the girl replied in the negative but misunderstood it to mean that I knew French. Then the strange thing happened.

She launched into fluent French which, of course, I did not understand at all, until she uttered three words in English which, atleast for a few moments, naturally flattered my ego. She said "I love you."

Now for the anti-climax which, too, I faithfully record even though it makes me feel like a fool. A Turk who

TAURUS EXPRESS

knew a little English entered our compartment at that moment, the girl repeated the whole story to him in Turkish and he explained that some English tourist had once told her "I Love You" and she wanted to know what it meant. We all had a hearty laugh.

* * * *

Interesting are the experiences one has on the Taurus Express, which has, among the passengers, representatives of practically every major nation in the world. As varied and interesting a crowd as one may expect to find on an ocean liner!

We shared our compartment for sometime with an Iranian couple, a consular official stationed in Damascus and his wife, who had been to Turkey for a holiday. They were both dressed in Western style and, until I heard them talking in Persian, I never imagined their nationality. I know practically no Persian and they knew no English but still I managed to talk to them on such diverse topics as Mahatma Gandhi and the position of Muslim women in India—by a strange improvised mixture of Hindustani, Persian, English and French. Necessity can obviously surmount lingual obstacles!

* * * *

We left Ankara in the evening. Next morning, as we tore across the face of Turkey, I had some idea of the immensity of this country. It was, however, for the most part barren land with little trace of cultivation. Irrigation, however, is making a headway and fruit orchards are to be seen at infrequent intervals. We had apples for breakfast and oranges for lunch, bought from peasant children at small way-side stations.

One feels cramped sitting long in the compartment. While walking in the corridor, I met an interesting young man who carried a violin case in his hand. He was getting down at the next station and I had a few words with him in English-cum-French-cum-pantomime. I learnt that he was a music student and in the holidays he, like many others, was going on a tour of small towns in the interior to play at inns and cafes to create taste for music among the people

* * *

We crossed the Syrian frontier at about 5 p.m. It is marked only by a little pyramid jutting out of the earth. Elsewhere in the world far more clearly defined frontiers are being violated. Turkey, however, has no imperialist designs even though Syria was once under her domination. In spite of the great military strength he built up, Kamal never dreamt of reviving Ottoman imperialism. Even the staunchest Turkish patriots I talked to not once mentioned the possibility of their country demanding the return of the territory that once comprised the Turkish empire. They have rationally realized, as Hitler and Mussolini have not, that genuine nationalism must respect the nationalism of the neighbour!

* * *

I cannot subsist for long on a fruitarian diet. In the evening I repaired to the Dining Car for a regular meal. I shared the table with a remarkable man—a representative of the international finance and capital! He owns a firm that prints currency notes for Turkey and the Balkan countries and also lends money to some of the small monarchies of Eastern Europe. He seemed to be on familiar terms with all the rulers of these states and told me some amusing but unprintable anecdotes about some of them.

TAURUS EXPRESS

He proved to be an Englishman who had begun his career as an Army officer in India. Learning that I was an Indian he tried some *Sub Achha Hai?* stuff on me which first annoyed and then amused me

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At 8-30 p.m. we reached Haleb (Aleppo), one of the important Syrian towns, famous in old days for its mirrors. The Turkish boy and girl as well as the Iranian couple got down here as they were travelling by bus to Damascus. The 'through' carriages were connected to a new train and we were on our way to Tel Kutchak.

Meanwhile, the small compartment was invaded by a number of Syrians who piled up luggage up to the ceiling. I noticed that while the men wore the Arab dress or European suits with fez, the two young women sported the latest Parisian frocks. No one in the compartment, however, spoke any language except Arabic and so we got very little beyond formal salutations of *Assalamun Alaikum* and *Wa'alkum us salam*.

The whole night I passed sitting bolt upright in a most uncomfortable position. It was amusing, however, to note that during these eight hours we at least twice went back to Turkey. The Turko-Syrian border runs in a very zigzag manner here and the train keeps popping in and out of the two countries.

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In the morning I walked along the corridor to another compartment which was practically empty. Here I met two young men, a Syrian and an Iraqi. They were both returning from Europe after completing their studies in aviation. They were both imbued with modern ideas, were anxious

to westernize life in their respective countries and intensely disliked foreign domination From the Syrian I learnt that the French may be democrats at home but they are imperialists abroad and that their presence in Syria as mandatories is resented by nationalists The Iraqi boy thought, though his country had been declared independent, it was still politically as well as economically dominated by Great Britain

At 9 a m we reached Tel Kotchak where, for the present, the railway line ends.

. . . .

For the next several days I was very much mixed up with Oil

At Tel Kotchak I met a party of eight Americans (who at once became friendly and informal and half a dozen Englishmen (who maintained their characteristic reserve) who all got down from the same train I found that they were employees of oil companies and were on their way to Bahrein in the Persian gulf The Americans belong to the Standard Oil Co, and the Englishmen to some British firm

A fleet of cars and a truck for luggage awaited the fifteen of us who had through tickets to Baghdad

For a few miles we drove along the railway track that is under construction, then we tumbled across the sandy barren plain guided only by the track beaten by the passage of cars Having crossed the Syrian-Iraqi frontier at noon, we reached Mosul at about 3 in the afternoon

It proved to be a struggling, poverty-stricken town. The Rest House maintained by the Iraqi Railways provid-

TAURUS EXPRESS

ed us with accommodation comparable to Dak Bungalows in India at a price one would have paid in Hotel Waldorf Astoria in New York! After three sleepless nights in the train, any kind of bed was heaven and I slept like a log till it was time for dinner

A strange character appeared in the lounge of the Rest House while we were sipping black Arab coffee after dinner. He was a tall swarthy Arab Sheikh, a small chieftain, who spoke perfect English and carried on conversation in whispers with some British oil-men who were also staying there. The word went round that, though out of politics, he was a 'big shot' in Iraq and that he was in touch with most foreign commercial interests operating in the country. From what I heard he enjoyed a reputation that was a cross between an intriguing diplomat and a gang-leader. Reading in the 'Iraq Times' that night about a new oil concession having been granted by the Iraqi Parliament (despite opposition), I wondered if the mysterious Sheikh had something to do with it.

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Next morning, after breakfast, we left Mosul in a 'Desert Bus'—a huge vehicle with comfortable seats and practically air-conditioned. For hundreds of miles we travelled across an arid, waterless desert. Here and there we passed a small village built round a water-hole. The biggest of these is Arbil which, someone said, is even mentioned in the Bible. This desert country, it is strange to reflect, was the home of one of the world's oldest civilizations—the Assyrian! It was heart-breaking to witness the terrible poverty of the people in this region though the sight of a school was an encouraging sign of progress. One of the Americans, sitting next to me, amazed me with the sympathetic attitude he took in talking about Iraq and Iraqis.

"Sure, these guys are as good as me or you. Give them a little education, start an irrigation scheme and this desert will become another California where I come from "

In the late afternoon we passed some oil-wells—owned by the British, of course—and then drove along the precious pipe-line which is one of the most vital veins of the Empire

Behind us the derricks of the oil-wells were silhouetted against a flaming sunset sky as we reached Kirkuk and found the train waiting for us Dinner at the Railway Rest House—and we were on the last lap of our journey to Baghdad !



BAGHDAD—BASRAH—KARACHI

I was in Baghdad only for a few hours and it is possible that I did not see the best of it. I had no time to see for myself the various progressive features that, I learn, the present Iraqi government has introduced. The general glimpse of the city that I had was disappointing and I could hardly believe that this was the famed city of the Arabian Nights, the capital of the empire of Haroun Al Rashid! The gilded splendour of mediaeval monarchies was but transitory and Baghdad to-day is a dusty town, not too clean, the old river Tigris that flows in the middle of the city being its only redeeming feature. As one walks through the indistinguished and prosaic streets of modern Baghdad, one is inevitably reminded of the glorious days of this city when it was one of the world's greatest centres of culture and commerce.

Westernization, however, seems to have already made considerable headway in Iraq. Almost the first thing I saw in the street was the sign-board on a shop—*Makhzan-ul-Hollywood* (Hollywood Store)! It was also surprising to see powdered and rouged young women walking about freely, their black *chudars* serving only an ornamental purpose. The picturesque camel has been replaced by prosaic motor cars for transport and regular trains or bus services connect Baghdad with the holy places in the neighbourhood.

I took a car and went to Kerbala. The road is passable but on either side of it is spread the great waterless desert. It was here that the immortal martyr of Islam, Imam Husain, the grandson of Prophet Mohamed, with his 72 followers, faced the merciless hordes of the tyrant Yezid and preferring death to servility, left behind an inspiring example to

all lovers of freedom and fighters against injustice Yezid was a powerful King Yet to-day no one even knows where he is buried while Muslims all over the world annually commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Husain and thousands of pilgrims may be seen every day at his magnificent tomb in the little town of Kerbala

Towards the afternoon I returned from Kerbala with fever caused, no doubt, by the long and far from comfortable train journey from Paris to Baghdad The same evening I had to take the train to Basrah to catch the steamer for Karachi I owe Baghdad another visit

The train pulled up at Basrah, alongside the wharf, but it was several hours before we were allowed to go on board I found Basrah full of Indians including merchants, doctors, tailors and clerks resident there, besides a host of pilgrims returning to India The Indian community of Basrah has remained there since the days of the Great War when Indian troops were stationed there and the administration of Iraq was under the India Office

Basrah has the appearance of a modern, well-planned town It has a prosperous future because, besides its growing sea-port, it is also now an important Air junction

Aboard SS "Varsova" I found my American friends as well as the British oil-men All of them were travelling to Bahrein and for two days we had a lot of fun together They were travelling in First Class while I was a deck passenger but to these sturdy democrats, that hardly seemed to make any difference They would often come down to see me and sat sprawling on the deck with us and scandalized their fellow-passengers by inviting me to dine with them in the First Class

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